A PLAIN and EASY INTRODUCTION TO THE *PRINCIPLES* OF NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION;

WITH A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE REASONABLENESS and CERTAINTY OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

INTENDED FOR *YOUNG STUDENTS in particular*;

And exhibiting much of the Substance of Dr. JENKIN's learned Work, long out of print, on the same Subject.

By a Clergyman of the Church of England.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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engage and gratify their attention. But the inſtruction of *young* perſons in particular has been ſought for;—and of others, who like *them*, may be ſuppoſed to have moſt to *learn* concerning the principles of religious information. For *their* uſe principally, is this ſlight ſketch intended, as an introduction to more voluminous, and abſtruſer, works upon the ſame ſubjects, or others, in connection with them.

Of performances not unlike in tendency with the following, it will be remembered, that there are many to be met with in the Engliſh Language: ſuch as, *Addiſon*'s "Evidences of the Chriſtian Re-"ligion;"—*Grotius*, "on the truth "of the Chriſtian Religion;"—

Dr. *Clarke*, "on the unchangeable "obligations of natural Religion, "and the truth and certainty of "the Chriſtian Revelation;"—Mr. *Locke*, "on the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity;—Bp. *Stillingfleet*'s "Origines Sacræ:"—to which, of later works, might be added, Dr. *Beattie*'s "Evidences of Chriſ-"tianity;"—Mr. *Bryant*'s treatiſe "on the Chriſtian Religion;"—and Dr. *Paley*'s recent publication upon the ſame ſubject.—But for purpoſes more *elementary* than the generality of theſe, were the following pages prepared, and in part printed, before the laſt mentioned performance came to the Editor's acquaintance:—to whom, from motives chiefly of a domeſtic nature, it had been made a matter of

occupation, during a reſidence in the country, to draw up the following ſhort review of certain evidences in relation to Chriſtianity, for the moſt part from Dr. *Jenkin*'s learned treatiſe "on the truth and certainty "of the Chriſtian Religion;"—a work, long out of print, and in particular made choice of for this purpoſe, from the ſmall apparent probability of a ſpeedy republication.—To this, ſuch preparatory conſiderations have been added, from other ſources, as appeared likely to be moſt intereſting and convenient to young beginners.

The utility therefore of the publication will be that chiefly of opening the way a little in theſe matters, and of compriſing in a

ſmaller compaſs, what at preſent lies diffuſed among larger volumes: an advantage, which, to a variety of readers, and eſpecially to the younger candidates for Holy Orders, will probably be found to be not inconſiderable.—Beyond this, the Editor truſts it is unneceſſary to avail himſelf of any further apology, for a well-meant effort in behalf of Chriſtianity, at a time when ſo many exertions are daily making to diminiſh and defeat its influence.

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INTRODUCTION
TO
NATURAL and REVEALED
RELIGION.

PART THE FIRST.

SECTION I.

Of the EXISTENCE of GOD.

BY the word GOD, is to be underſtood a Being of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs; the creator and governor of all things; to whom the great attributes of eternity and independency, omniſcience and immenſity, perfect holineſs and purity, perfect juſtice and veracity, complete happineſs, glorious majeſty, and ſu-

preme right of dominion properly belong;—to whom the higheſt veneration, the moſt profound ſubmiſſion and obedience are therefore due.

That there really is ſuch a Being in the world;—entitled to ſuch homage, and inveſted with ſuch characters, is clearly to be perceived from the exiſtence of that material world which we inhabit. For if ever there were a time when nothing did exiſt, it is very manifeſt that nothing ever could have exiſted. But, on the contrary, the glorious frame and conſtitution of the univerſe, its grandeur and aſtoniſhing magnificence, the various phænomena and kinds of beings, the uniformity obſerved in their production, with the uſes and the ends for which they ſerve, all plainly ſhew that an almighty deſigner, a wiſdom and power infinite muſt have contrived

theſe great works of Creation, and ſtill preſides over and directs them. This is the proof which the Apoſtle of the Gentiles refers us to;—when he informs us, that "the inviſible "things of GOD, his eternal power "and Godhead, are clearly ſeen from "the world which he has formed, "being underſtood by the things that "are created."

The nature of the argument is plainly this;—that deſign, contrivance, forecaſt, arrangement, creation, and preſervation, all imply, what we are ſure *matter* does not poſſeſs, activity of principle, reaſon and underſtanding. And ſeeing theſe to be ſo manifeſtly prevailing in what is created, we from hence infer the neceſſity of a divine architect and ruler of the univerſe.—This conſideration made even the Heathen Philoſopher with good reaſon

to conclude,*—" that whoever thinks " the wonderful order and incredible " conſtancy of the heavenly bodies " and their motions (whereon the " preſervation and welfare of all " things do depend) is not governed " and directed by an intelligent being, " ought himſelf to be accounted void " of underſtanding.—For ſhall we, " when we ſee a piece of artificial " machinery, a ſphere, a dial, or any " ſuch contrivance, acknowledge at " firſt ſight, that it is the work of art " and underſtanding; and yet, when " we behold the heavens moved and " whirled about with aſtoniſhing ce- " lerity, uniformly performing their " periodical revolutions,—make any " ſcruple to confeſs, that theſe are the " performances not only of reaſon, " but of a certain very excellent and " divine reaſon?"

* Cicero, de nat. Deor.

SECTION II.

ILLUSTRATION of the ARGUMENT.

THE argument which teaches us from works created to infer the neceſſity of a Creator, is of a kind adapted to the capacity and underſtanding of all men. It brings GOD down to our ſenſes, as it were; and carries its own conviction with it.—And though it be not neceſſary for us here to purſue the evidences of the Creator into his works, to ſeek for inſtances to prove to us his exiſtence, by endeavouring either to trace him amidſt his greater operations, or to diſcover him in his leſſer ones (where to us indeed he may perhaps appear *maximus in minimis*, though to infinite power all is equally eaſy in performance); yet it

will afford a pleaſing illuſtration of this argument to contemplate the lofty and elegant mode of treating it by a learned modern; while at the ſame time we confeſs, that for grandeur and ſublimity of conception, nothing can exceed the language of the holy writings in particular alluſions to the Creator's handy-works.

" To prove to any one" ſays a learned writer,* " the grandneſs of " the fabric of the world, as the work " of an almighty architect, one need " only bid him to conſider the Sun, " with that inſupportable glory and " luſtre that ſurrounds it;—demon- " ſtrate to him the vaſt diſtance, " magnitude and heat of it;—repreſent " to him the chorus of planets mov- " ing periodically by uniform laws " in their reſpective orbits around it,

* Woollaſton Rel. of Nature.

" affording a regular variety of aſpects;
" guarded ſome of them by ſecondary
" planets, and as it were, emulating
" the ſtate of the Sun, and probably
" all poſſeſſed by proper inhabitants;
" —remind him of thoſe ſurpriſing
" viſits the comets make us; the
" large trains and uncommon ſplen-
" dour that attends them; the far
" country they come from, and the
" curioſity and horror they excite,
" not only among us, but in the
" inhabitants of other planets, who
" alſo may be up to ſee the entry and
" the progreſs of theſe miniſters of
" fate;—direct his eye and contem-
" plation through thoſe azure fields,
" and vaſt regions above him, up to
" the fixed ſtars, that radiant num-
" berleſs hoſt of heaven;—and make
" him underſtand how improbable a
" thing it is, that they ſhould be
" placed there only to beſpangle and

" adorn a canopy over our heads;—
" convince him that they are rather
" ſo many other ſuns, with their
" ſeveral regions and ſets of planets
" about them;—ſhew him by the
" help of glaſſes, ſtill more and more
" of theſe fixed lights, and beget
" in him an apprehenſion of their
" unaccountable numbers, and of
" thoſe immenſe ſpaces which lie
" retired beyond our utmoſt reach,
" and even imagination;—I ſay,
" one need but to do this, and ex-
" plain to him ſuch things as are now
" almoſt known to every body, and
" by it to ſhew him that if the world
" be not infinite, it is *infinito ſimilis*,
" and therefore ſure a magnificent
" ſtructure, and the work of an infi-
" nitely wiſe and powerful Creator.

" In like manner, who can obſerve
" the vapours to aſcend, eſpecially

" from the ſea, meet above in clouds,
" and fall again after condenſation,
" and not perceive this to be a kind
" of diſtillation to clear the water of
" its groſſer ſalts, and then, by rains
" or dews, to ſupply the fountains and
" rivers with freſh and wholeſome
" liquor; to nouriſh the vegetables
" below by ſhowers, which deſcend
" in drops, as from a watering pot,
" upon a garden?—Who can view
" the ſtructure of a plant or animal;
" the indefinite number of their fibres
" and fine veſſels, the formations of
" larger veſſels, and the ſeveral mem-
" bers out of them, with the fitting
" diſpoſition of all theſe; the way
" laid out for the reception and
" diſtribution of nouriſhment; the
" effect this nutriment has in extend-
" ing the veſſels, bringing the vege-
" table or animal to its true growth
" and expanſion, continuing the mo-

" tion of the ſeveral fluids, repairing
" the decays of the body, and pre-
" ſerving life?—Who can take notice
" of the ſeveral faculties of animals,
" their arts of ſaving and providing
" for themſelves, or the ways in which
" they are provided for; the uſes of
" plants to animals, and of ſome
" animals to others, particularly to
" mankind; the care taken that the
" ſeveral ſpecies ſhould be propagated
" out of their proper ſeeds, the ſtrong
" inclination of animals for that pur-
" poſe, their love of their young, and
" the like?—I ſay, who can do this,
" and not ſee a deſign in ſuch regu-
" lar pieces, ſo nicely wrought, and ſo
" excellently preſerved?—Since then
" we cannot ſuppoſe that the parts of
" matter at firſt contrived this won-
" derful form of a *world* among
" themſelves, and then by agreement
" took their reſpective poſts, and

" purſued conſtant ends by certain
" methods and meaſures concerted
" (becauſe theſe are acts of which
" they are not capable), there *muſt be*
" ſome other Being, whoſe wiſdom
" and power are equal to ſuch a
" mighty work, as is the ſtructure
" and preſervation of the univerſe.
" There muſt be ſome ALMIGHTY
" MIND, who models and adorns it;
" who lays the cauſes ſo deep; pre-
" ſcribes to them ſuch uniform and
" ſteady laws; deſtines and adapts
" them to certain purpoſes, and
" makes one thing to anſwer to, and
" fit another."

SECTION III.

Of the NATURE and ATTRIBUTES of GOD.

WHAT the nature and eſſence of the ALMIGHTY is, we muſt not imagine ourſelves able, after the ſtricteſt inquiry and application, to apprehend: this being a matter abſolutely impoſſible, from the infinite diſproportion between our faculty of apprehenſion, and the object itſelf to be conceived.—Our minds being finite, they cannot without a manifeſt contradiction comprehend what is truly infinite.

But though we muſt for ever deſpair of "finding out the ALMIGHTY to "perfection," yet we ought not to give over our diſquiſitions and enqui-

ries after Him; ſince the pleaſure and advantages they are rewarded with, are much more than a compenſation for all the pains of our attention and reſearches.

For theſe reaſons we are not only permitted, but encouraged, to make the nature of GOD the ſubject of our contemplation. And though the redundant luſtre of his deity prevents him from being directly looked upon, yet we may behold it by reflection; and from conſidering our own ſouls, which are ſaid to be framed after the "image of GOD," we may raiſe ſome tolerable idea of his infinite perfections.—We perceive, for inſtance, what thought is;—but at the ſame time, we perceive likewiſe the advantage of ſuch an eaſy thought as ariſes without any effort, exertion or trouble on our part; ſuch, as by the ſenſe of

hearing or ſeeing is produced in us:—we perceive alſo in our minds a love of truth;—and we are ſenſible that we act moſt perfectly, when we act upon the cleareſt views, and in moſt ſtrict purſuance of them.—Now out of all this we may eaſily raiſe in our imaginations the idea of a MIND which ſees all things by a clear and perfect intuition, without the poſſibility of being miſtaken;—which always acts in that light, upon the ſureſt proſpect, and with the moſt perfect reaſon; which rejoices therefore in every thing that it does, and has a conſtant perception of all truths before its eyes.—This idea ſo naturally ariſes from what we perceive both of the perfections and imperfections of our own minds, that a very little reflection will enable us to form it, to a very *high* degree.

The firſt ſtep therefore, in order to do juſtice in our thoughts to GOD, and to form right apprehenſions of him, will be to aſcribe all imaginable and poſſible perfections to him.—Every perfection that is poſſible in itſelf, muſt be ſuppoſed poſſible to him.—We ſay of GOD, that he is a SPIRIT; that is, a Being totally unlike to *body* and *matter*; which being determined by the neceſſary laws of motion, are incapable of knowledge and liberty, and conſequently, of wiſdom and goodneſs. We ſay of him, that he is the cauſe of all other beings which were by him, and are always dependent on him:—that nothing is exempted from his knowledge, and power, and providence;—that he adminiſters all things in the way of goodneſs and wiſdom, of juſtice and truth; and therefore all things are to be referred to him as

their laſt end. Theſe and all other poſſible perfections we are to conſider the divine nature as being fully poſſeſſed of, in an infinitely higher and more excellent degree, than our finite underſtandings are able to comprehend.

Secondly, we are to ſeparate and remove all manner of imperfection from him. Becauſe, to admit of any the leaſt ſhadow of defect, is to ſtrike at the foundation, and to deſtroy one of the cleareſt and moſt eſſential notions we have of God. And above all, we muſt be careful in our conceptions of the Almighty, to clear him of all moral imperfections, wherein the holy Scriptures have more eſpecially taken care to guard his honour, by removing every thing of this kind from his character.

Theſe are ſome rules which may be of uſe to govern our opinions concerning the attributes and perfections of God. But we muſt ever remember, that *theſe* are not to be conſidered by us, as having any diſtinct and ſeparate ſubſiſtence in the divine nature, but only in the manner of our conceiving them, according to their different and external operations. In ourſelves indeed, becauſe we are limited and compounded creatures, there are certain powers and faculties really diſtinct from one another, and from our own eſſence; ſo that what we *do* admits a ſeparate conſideration from what we *are*: but in God there can be no inherent powers and faculties formally diſtinct from one another, or from himſelf.—To ſuppoſe ſuch a diſtinction, would be to deſtroy the perfect ſimplicity and unity of his nature, and to infer ſuch a ſort of

compoſition in it, as an all-perfect being is abſolutely incapable of. It is therefore, from the deficiency of our underſtanding (which cannot conceive things in the groſs), that we divide our notions, and contemplate the ſame infinite being under different apprehenſions, which we call *attributes*. But even what we call attributes in God, muſt not be ſuppoſed to be of the ſame kind and quality with what we term properties in men, but ſomething that muſt be underſtood in a ſenſe infinitely more exalted and ſublime. The truth is, we perceive in our own minds, pity, and compaſſion, love, and hatred, wiſdom, knowledge, and the like; and thence we transfer them to the nature of God, and call them by the name of his Attributes. But then we are to remember that between theſe as they are in us, and when aſcribed to God,

the difference is in reality infinite: that in *us* they are but faint ſhadows, and reſemblances of the divine attributes;—and that theſe attributes are the originals, the true realities; of a nature infinitely ſuperior to, and different from, any thing we diſcern in his creatures, or that can poſſibly be conceived by finite underſtandings. For "as the heavens are higher than "the earth, ſo are *his* ways higher than "our ways, and *his* thoughts, than "our thoughts." Our powers and faculties do leſs perfectly imitate and reſemble HIM, than a picture does a living man; and yet, if we reaſon from them by way of analogy and proportion, they are ſufficient to give us ſuch a notion of his divine perfections, as will oblige us to fear and love, to obey and ſerve him.

SECTION IV.

Of the incommunicable ATTRIBUTES *of* GOD.

AMONG the incommunicable attributes of the deity, as they are called, we reckon his *Eternity:* by which is aſcribed to him an infinite duration; which never had a beginning, and will never have an end.—For what depends not upon any thing external for its exiſtence, muſt always be unalterably the ſame; ſince having no other cauſe of its exiſtence but the abſolute neceſſity of its own nature, it muſt of neceſſity have exiſted from everlaſting, without beginning, and muſt of neceſſity exiſt to everlaſting, without end.

By the *Immenſity* of GOD is meant that infinite greatneſs, whereby his being has no bounds or limits, but every where diffuſes and ſpreads itſelf beyond what we can imagine.—We cannot therefore define the preſence of GOD by any certain place, ſo as to ſay "here He is," but "there He is "not:" for he is every where preſent; the whole world doth not confine him, but he fills all the ſpace beyond this world, and infinitely more than we can imagine. Nor is his glory and majeſty at all diminiſhed by ſuppoſing him to be always actually preſent in all, even impure, places. For as the beams of the ſun are no way ſoiled by the matter that they ſhine upon; and as the purity and holineſs of the divine nature is not in the leaſt diminiſhed by beholding all the wickedneſs and moral impurity that is carried on in the world, ſo the omnipreſent eſſence

of GOD is not at all affected by any natural impurity of things or places whatever; becauſe it is the ſuperlative excellence and prerogative of his nature to act always upon all things every where, but itſelf to be acted upon by nothing.

By the *Immutability* of GOD is meant that He always is, and was, and to all eternity will be, the ſame; being ſubject to no changes either in his eſſence or perfections.

In reſpect of the *Unity* of GOD, it is to be obſerved, that the ſcripture ſometimes gives the title of *Gods* to ſuch as are only creatures, upon account of ſome character or reſemblance that they bear to the divine being; —ſuch as Angels, Magiſtrates, and Judges. But though there be many, who upon theſe accounts may be called *Gods*, yet there is but ONE,

who by way of eminence is ſo named; that is, one eternal and infinite, one ſupreme and independent, one all-powerful and all-wiſe, one perfectly juſt, and merciful and good GOD:—one who created all things, on whom all things depend, by whom they ſubſiſt; and by whoſe wiſdom they are directed.—This is undoubtedly the reſult of our reflections, as both by ſcripture and by reaſon we are inſtructed to employ them, upon the abſtract nature of God's exiſtence. And ſo fully is the *Unity* of the divine Being to be for ever acknowledged and maintained by us.—But as to what particular conſiderations may be eſteemed compatible and conſiſtent with this eſſential unity of the divine nature, we preſume not to ſay more, than what the holy ſcriptures evidently teach us.—We obſerve in theſe, that though one GOD alone be acknow-

ledged by them, yet that a diſtinction in ſome very material reſpects, is as completely pointed out concerning him, as would in ordinary ſpeech and eſtimation ſerve to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh three *perſons* from one another. And hence it is, that though the appellation "Perſons" be not uſed in ſcripture for this purpoſe, nor yet the very term itſelf "Trinity" be there met with,—yet in ordinary ſpeech, for want of adequate and more appropriate terms, we are accuſtomed to ſpeak of this diſtinction by the uſe of the expreſſion "perſons:" uniting the three diſtinctions under the word "Trinity;" and at the ſame time ſuppoſing theſe to be reconcileable with the real exiſtence of the "Unity;" a term likewiſe not to be found for this purpoſe in the holy Scriptures.— It is ſufficient however for us to be aſſured that the doctrine itſelf is there:

a myſtery, into which we could not poſſibly have had the ſmalleſt inſight, had not the SPIRIT of HIM, who knoweth his own nature and ſubſtance beſt, been pleaſed to *reveal* it to us.—And as to the conceiving, or the expreſſing, of this doctrine, as it is a matter infinitely *beyond* what we have adequate powers or terms afforded us for doing *either*, we muſt be contented to do *both*, in ſuch a manner, as, upon the whole, ſeems to come neareſt to the reality of the caſe before us:—to regulate our ſentiments upon the ſubject, and to expreſs them, as well as we are able, and there with all humility let our reſearches be concluded.

" *Neſcire velle, quæ* MAGISTER OPTIMUS
" *Docere non vult, erudita inſcitia eſt.*"

Scal.

The knowledge of a perſonal diſtinction in the divine eſſence is conveyed

to us by the holy writings, under the expreſs terms of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; with a diſtinct agency and office] aſcribed to each;—as our CREATOR, REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER. And it is enough for us to be perſuaded that the Scriptures *do* make this diſtinction of "perſons," (as we ſpeak), all equally partakers of the divine nature, and all poſſeſſing the divine perfections:—that theſe three "perſons,' according to the ſame Scriptures, are but *one* GOD;—and that this Trinity in Unity, or three perſons in one GOD, although a ſubject, which it was never deſigned that we ſhould *fully* comprehend, is yet a doctrine neither contradictory in itſelf, nor *oppoſite* to our reaſon; but ſuch, as upon many conſiderations may ſafely be admitted, and for the higheſt reaſons ought to be acknowledged,—as the very baſis, and foundation of Chriſtianity.

SECTION V.

Of the communicable ATTRIBUTES *of* GOD.

THERE are alſo other attributes of the Deity, called communicable; becauſe they are in a lower degree *communicated* to other inferior Beings. *Life* is one of theſe. GOD alone, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, may be ſaid to *live*; as operating independently, and having life in himſelf: whereas living creatures, even thoſe which ſeem to be moſt free and vigorous in their actions, are only agents in ſubordination to HIM, "in whom they live, and move, "and have their being."

Secondly, GOD is a *Spirit*; that is, a ſubſtance without body, parts, and paſſions.

This is not only a propoſition of our Chriſtian faith, and what is deducible from ſeveral declarations in the Jewiſh law, but a principle of religion which even the Heathens were not unacquainted with, who ſpake of him as "a pure Mind."

The qualities of a Spirit may in ſome meaſure be imagined from conſidering the properties of matter;—being juſt contrary to theſe. A Spirit we conceive to be an immaterial, incorruptible, impaſſible ſubſtance; incapable of being divided, or impaired by any force whatever; an immenſe Mind, or Intelligence, ſelf-active, ſelf-moving, and wholly above the comprehenſion of bodily ſenſe: free, in ſhort, from all the imperfections of matter, and all the infirmities of corporeal beings, and of a nature far more excellent than any finite or created Spirit

whatever;—as being originally ſuch, and therefore not improperly ſtyled "the Father of ſpirits;" and "the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh."

Thirdly, by the *Knowledge* of God we mean that perfection or faculty, whereby he underſtands, and conſiders things abſolutely, and as they are in their own natures, their powers, properties, and differences, together with all the circumſtances belonging to them.—Our knowledge is very ſcanty and limited. Angels according to the higher perfection of their faculties comprehend ſtill more than we do. But the knowledge of God is abſolutely unlimited, and perfectly univerſal; infinite as his duration, and boundleſs as his immenſity; extending to all things every where without exception, and to all the properties and powers of things, without reſtriction.

And as ſuch is the Knowledge of God, implying a bare ſpeculative act of the divine mind, ſo alſo, fourthly, the *Wiſdom* of God may be conſidered as partaking more of a practical nature in him; though both *one*, in his infinite eſſence: the latter being a full and perfect comprehenſion of the reſpects and relations of things to one another; of their agreement and oppoſition, their fitneſs and unfitneſs to particular ends and purpoſes. This is infinite and perfect Wiſdom; to know always the beſt end, to ſee always the means that will produce that end, to underſtand exactly how to apply thoſe means, and to have always a right and invariable inclination to act accordingly. — God therefore we conſider as originally and independently wiſe; — and that all created wiſdom, whether of men or angels, is but, as it were, a ſpark of

the divine light, like that of the planets from the Sun.

Fifthly, by the *Power* of God, is meant that ability and ſtrength to bring to paſs whatever he pleaſes;—whatever his infinite wiſdom can direct, or the infinite purity of his will can reſolve;—provided the thing be not inconſiſtent with itſelf, and not incompatible with his divine nature and perfections.

Sixthly, the *Happineſs* of God is no other than a fixed ſtate of contentment and ſatisfaction, of pleaſure and delight, ſelf-approbation and ſelf-complacency, ariſing from the ſecure poſſeſſion of all that is good and deſireable, that is, of all excellency and perfection. This we look upon as the very eſſence of happineſs; and as ſuch, fit to be aſcribed to him;—being the moſt perfect and conſummate felicity of his nature.

SECTION VI.

Of the moral ATTRIBUTES of GOD.

OF all the moral Attributes of GOD, that which naturally occurs firſt to our thoughts is *Holineſs*;—that peculiar eminence of the divine nature, by which it is ſeparate and removed at an infinite diſtance from all moral imperfection, that is *Sin*: by which we mean, that there is no ſuch thing as malice, envy, hatred, revenge, imperiouſneſs, cruelty, tyranny, injuſtice, falſehood, or unfaithfulneſs in GOD. And by his Holineſs, we mean, that he is not only devoid of theſe, but that he poſſeſſes the contrary perfections to an infinite degree.

Secondly, by his *Goodneſs* we furniſh to ourſelves an idea of him, under the lovely character of the beſt and moſt beneficent, as well as the greateſt and moſt powerful Being in the univerſe;—the inexhauſtible fountain of grace, mercy, truth, pity, bounty, righteouſneſs, forgiveneſs, patience, and long-ſuffering.

Thirdly, the *Juſtice* of God, is that eternal rectitude of the divine nature, whereby he orders and diſpoſes all things according to the rules laid down by his infinite wiſdom; and by which he governs all mankind with the utmoſt exactneſs and impartiality, with reſpect to the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments. By theſe rules thus enacted, he ſets bounds, as it were, to his own authority; ſo that goodneſs, juſtice, and truth are eſſential properties in the divine nature,

antecedent to any conſideration of his will, and what he can no more alter or unſettle, than he can deny himſelf, or ceaſe to be.

Fourthly, the *Veracity* of God is that eternal rectitude of the divine mind, whereby his ideas are exactly conformable to the truth and reality of things, and his words anſwerable to his ideas in whatever way they are made known to us; ſo as to import the utmoſt ſincerity in his declarations, and fidelity in his promiſes, made at any time to the ſons of men. As God is all-wiſe, he cannot be deceived; and all motives to deceive, we know, to be infinitely removed from the perfection of his divine nature.

Here then is a firm and laſting baſis for our truſt and confidence in God, in all our expectations, hopes,

and bleſſings, founded in his expreſs promiſes and aſſurances:—and as juſtly are our fears and apprehenſions to be excited, in proportion to his threatnings and denunciations.—The reſult obviouſly is, that a firm belief and aſſent is univerſally required from us, as it is alſo ſufficiently grounded, upon theſe conſiderations, in whatever caſe a declaration of GOD's will is vouchſafed to mankind. Not indeed that he requires us implicitly to believe every thing that goes under the name of a divine revelation. This is a matter, that he ſubmits to our enquiry, bidding us to uſe our utmoſt diligence in the ſearch, that we may be able to give a reaſonable account of the faith that is in us.

But after we have thus made our enquiry, and upon examination are convinced that ſuch and ſuch things

are for a certainty revealed to us by GOD, our belief then ſtands not ſo much upon the credibility of the things themſelves, as upon the truth and veracity of HIM who has revealed them.

If therefore we receive the ſcriptures as the word of GOD, and are ſatisfied of their divine authority, we ought in all conſcience to believe what is contained in them, even though there be ſome points of a nature to exceed our limited apprehenſion, and wherein our deepeſt reſearches can give us no particular ſatisfaction. The reaſon is, becauſe we are perſuaded that they are revealed by GOD who cannot lie; whoſe knowledge is infallible, whoſe word is truth, and upon whoſe teſtimony alone, if we are willing to glorify this perfection of the ſupreme Being, and ſet our ſeal to his

veracity, we ought to ſurrender our unfeigned aſſent.—In which ſenſe is that expreſſion of the apoſtle; "He "that believeth on the Son of GOD, "hath the witneſs of himſelf; he "that believeth not GOD, hath made "him a liar, becauſe he believeth "not the record, which GOD gave "of his Son."

SECTION VII.

Of Declarations in the SCRIPTURES concerning GOD.

HAVING thus given an account of what, for general uſe, it may be expedient to have ſaid concerning GOD's exiſtence and his attributes, as by our reaſon and *his Word*, we are taught concerning them, it cannot

but exalt and gratify our conceptions of Him, to ſee in ſome particular inſtances, with what ſublimity and grandeur of expreſſion he is made known to us, in that beſt and eaſieſt way of arriving to a proper knowledge of him,—the holy Scriptures themſelves.

" Canſt thou," ſays *Zophar*, in the book of *Job*,—" canſt thou by ſearch-
" ing find out GOD?—canſt thou
" find out the Almighty to perfec-
" tion?—it is as high as heaven; what
" canſt thou do?—deeper than hell,—
" what canſt thou know?—the mea-
" ſure thereof is longer than the earth,
" and broader than the ſea." To *Moſes* GOD declares himſelf by the all comprehenſive name of "I AM,"—that is, the ENS,—the truly exiſting Being;—the Being of Beings, the ſole, ſelf-exiſtent GOD.—And by his ſervant

Moſes He himſelf further declares, " I, even I, am HE:—and there is " *no* God with ME." By the mouth of his prophet *Iſaiah*, He again affirms, " There is no GOD beſides " ME, a juſt GOD and a SAVIOUR. " There is none beſides ME; for I am " GOD, and there is none elſe;—I am " the FIRST, and I am the LAST; " and I know NO OTHER."

His Eternity is thus finely repreſented by the Pſalmiſt,—LORD, thou " haſt been our refuge, from one " generation to another:—before the " mountains were brought forth, or " ever the foundation of the earth and " the world were laid, even from " everlaſting to everlaſting,—THOU " art GOD." And again, to denote the perpetual continuance of his duration—" THY years are throughout " all generations.—Of old THOU haſt

" laid the foundations of the earth,
" and the heavens are the work of
" THY hands.—They ſhall periſh,
" but THOU ſhalt endure: yea, all of
" them ſhall wax old, as doth a
" garment;—and as a veſture ſhalt
" thou change them,—and they ſhall
" be changed:—but THOU art the
" ſame, and THY years ſhall not fail."

" Haſt thou not known," ſays *Iſaiah*,—" haſt thou not heard, that
" the EVERLASTING GOD, the LORD,
" the Creator of the ends of the earth,
" fainteth not?—for thus ſaith the
" HIGH and lofty ONE that inha-
" biteth eternity,—I am the FIRST,
" and I am the LAST, and beſides ME
" there is *no* GOD."

" I am Alpha and Omega, the
" beginning and the ending, ſays the
" Lord:—which *Is*, and *was*, and is
" to *come*."

" Of his Greatneſs and Immenſity," ſays holy *David*, rapt into a glorious contemplation of theſe attributes, " Whither ſhall I go then from thy " SPIRIT?—or whither ſhall I flee " then from thy preſence?—If I " aſcend up into heaven, THOU art " *there*;—If I deſcend to hell, THOU " art *there* alſo.—If I take the wings " of the morning," dart as ſwiftly as the morning light from one end of heaven to another, " and remain in the " uttermoſt parts of the ſea, even *there* " ſhall THY hand lead me, and THY " right hand ſhall hold me." " I fill " heaven and earth," ſaith the LORD, (by his Prophet *Jeremiah*) " and can " any one hide himſelf in ſecret places, " that I ſhall not ſee him?—though " he dig into hell, thence ſhall MY " hand take him;—though he climb " up to heaven, thence will I bring " him down:—and though he hide

" himſelf in the top of *Carmel*, I " will ſearch and take him out from " thence."

Of the Unchangeableneſs of his nature and properties, decrees and purpoſes, threats, promiſes, and the like, we are thus inſtructed;—that " the counſel of the LORD ſtandeth " *for ever*;—and the thoughts of his " heart *to all generations*:"—that his " mercy and goodneſs endureth *for* " *ever*," and that " his righteouſneſs " is immoveable,—like the ſtrong " mountains." " His faithfulneſs he " will not ſuffer to fail; his covenant " will he not break, nor alter the " thing that is gone out of his lips." —" I the LORD have ſpoken it;— " it ſhall come to paſs;—I will do it; " —I will not go back, neither will " I ſpare."—The Sun, that great, moſt bright, and regular luminary in

the heavens,—that moſt conſtant diſpenſer of light, and warmth to this inferior world, may have its influence frequently varied by different motions, by clouds and ſhadows, or other cauſes,—but we are informed that with GOD, "the FATHER of "LIGHTS, there is *no* variableneſs, "neither ſhadow of turning."

SECTION VIII.

Of further Deſcriptions of GOD'S *ATTRIBUTES in the* SCRIPTURES.

THAT GOD is a *Mind*, an abſtract Being, pure from all matter, and diſtinguiſhed from whatever is paſſible, or capable of ſuffering, was a ſentiment concerning GOD, which even

ſome Heathens had attained to.—That GOD is a SPIRIT, is expreſſly told us in the Scriptures,—and "that "He is to be worſhipped accord-"ingly, in Spirit and in truth." From whence it follows, that to put a religious character upon any image, formed by the corrupt imagination of Man as a repreſentation of the inviſible and ſpiritual Deity, is to think the "Godhead to be like ſilver, or gold, "or ſtone, graven by art or man's "device."—"Have ye not known? "—have ye not heard?—hath it not "been told you from the beginning," (ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*)—"It is "GOD that ſitteth upon the circle of "the earth, and the inhabitants "thereof are but as graſshoppers?— "that ſtretcheth out the heavens as a "curtain, and ſpreadeth them out as a "tent to dwell in; that bringeth "princes to nothing, and maketh the

" judges of the earth as vanity.—To
" what then will ye liken ME? and to
" whom will ye make ME equal,
" ſaith the HOLY ONE?"

The general deſcription of his Knowledge, is,—that the SPIRIT of GOD knoweth the *deep things* of GOD. —" Known unto HIM are all his works " from the beginning of the world: nor " is there any creature that is not mani- " feſt in his ſight." "Hell and deſtruc- " tion are before him;" and "there " is no darkneſs or ſhadow of death, " where the workers of iniquity may " hide themſelves." "The ways of " man are before the eyes of the Lord, " and HE pondereth all his goings."— " There is not a word in their tongue, " but HE knoweth it altogether." " He that planted the ear, ſhall " HE not hear?—He that formed the " eye, ſhall HE not ſee? He that

" teacheth man knowledge, ſhall HE
" not underſtand?" " Who hath
" put wiſdom into the inward parts?
" —or who hath given underſtanding
" to the heart?"—but HE, " to whom
" the works of man are as the Sun
" before him;—to whom darkneſs
" is no darkneſs at all;—but the
" night is as clear as the day, the
" darkneſs and light are both alike."

" Where ſhall Wiſdom be found?"
(ſays *Job*) " or where is the place of
" Underſtanding?—GOD underſtand-
" eth the way, and knoweth the
" place thereof;—for he looketh to
" the ends of the earth, and ſeeth the
" whole heaven,—to make the weight
" for the winds, to weigh the waters
" by meaſure, to make a decree for
" the rain, and a way for the lightning
" of the thunder." " Who hath
" meaſured the waters in the hollow

" of his hand? who hath meted out
" the heaven with a ſpan;—compre-
" hended the duſt of the earth in a
" meaſure;—weighed the mountains
" in ſcales, and the hills in a balance?
" —Who hath directed the SPIRIT
" of the LORD, or, being his coun-
" ſeller hath taught him?—With
" whom took HE counſel?—Who
" inſtructed him in the path of
" judgement, and taught him know-
" ledge, and ſhewed to him the way
" of underſtanding?"

So again, of his Power;—" Wiſe
" is HE in heart, and mighty in
" ſtrength.— Who hath hardened
" himſelf againſt HIM and proſpered?
" HE removeth the mountains, and
" they know it not; HE overturneth
" them in his anger; HE ſhaketh the
" earth out of her place, and the
" pillars thereof tremble; HE com-

" mandeth the Sun, and it riſeth not;
" —He ſealeth up the ſtars."—" Yea
" before the day was, I am He:—
" and there is none that can deliver
" you out of my hand." " I am the
" Lord, your Holy One; the Creator
" of *Iſrael*, your King." I am He
" who maketh all things; who
" ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone;
" who ſpreadeth abroad the earth by
" Myself; who fruſtrateth the tokens
" of the liars, and maketh diviners
" mad; who turneth wiſe men back-
" ward, and maketh their knowledge
" fooliſh; who ſaith to the deep " be
" dry; and I will dry up thy rivers."
" I form the light, and I create
" darkneſs; I make peace, and create
" evil;—I the Lord do all theſe
" things." Well then might the
Pſalmiſt ſay, " The Lord is my rock,
" and my fortreſs, and my deliverer;
" my God, my ſtrength, in whom I

" will truſt.—The LORD is my light " and my Salvation;—whom then " ſhall I fear?—The LORD is the " ſtrength of my life; of whom " then ſhall I be afraid?—Though " an hoſt encamp againſt me, my " heart ſhall not fear;—though war " ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I " be confident."—And juſtly might he, when the great controller of the univerſe had given him this aſſurance, 'Becauſe thou haſt made the LORD, 'even THE MOST HIGH, thy habita-'tion, there ſhall no evil befal thee, 'neither ſhall any plague come nigh 'thy dwelling.' For as *Job* elegantly expreſſes it, " HE ſhall deliver " thee in ſix troubles; yea, in ſeven " there ſhall no evil touch thee; in " famine HE ſhall redeem thee from " death; and in war from the power " of the ſword.—At deſtruction and " famine thou ſhalt laugh; neither

" ſhalt thou be afraid of the beaſts " of the earth. For thou ſhalt be in " league with the ſtones of the field, " and the beaſts of the field ſhall be " at peace with thee."

As to Holineſs, if we look into the Scriptures, we find there no title ſo frequently given to GOD, as this of his holineſs. How often do we find him called " *the* HOLY ONE;" " the " HOLY ONE of *Iſrael*;" " the HOLY " ONE of *Jacob?*—A GOD who takes " no pleaſure in wickedneſs; neither " ſhall any evil dwell with him: " of purer eyes than to behold " iniquity."

Of the divine Benevolence, we read, that " the earth is full of his Goodneſs, " that GOD's delights are with the " ſons of men, giving to all liberally, " making his ſun to riſe upon the evil

" and upon the good, ſending rain
" upon the juſt and upon the unjuſt;
" being in ſhort good to all; and
" having his tender mercies over all
" his works."

To give us a ſenſible idea of his Compaſſion, the ſcriptures compare his diſpoſitions of this kind with the tendereſt affections among men; " as
" a father pitieth his children, even ſo
" the LORD pitieth them that fear
" him."—" Can a woman forget her
" ſucking child; that ſhe ſhould not
" have compaſſion on the ſon of her
" womb?—Yea, ſhe may forget:"
—it is poſſible, though very unlikely: but though a mother may become unnatural, yet GOD cannot prove unmerciful; " Behold, I have graven
" thee upon the palms of my hands;
" —I will not forget thee."

SECTION IX.

Of GOD's eſſential JUSTICE.

BUT while thus reflecting upon God's milder and more lovely attributes, we are tempted like the Pſalmiſt to exclaim with him, "Why "art thou ſo vexed, O my Soul, and "why art thou ſo diſquieted within "me?—Put thy truſt in GOD,—for I "will yet give him thanks" for his abundant goodneſs, his gracious promiſes, his ſure mercies, "who is the "health of my countenance and my "GOD," yet muſt we not at the ſame time neglect alſo to conſider that eternal rectitude of his nature, whereby, ordering and diſpoſing all things according to the

rules of his all-perfect wisdom, he is obliged by the very condition of things, to observe the utmost exactness and *impartiality* in the distribution of rewards and punishments.—And if the scriptures describe him as the "Father of us "all," as "loving all things that are, "and hating nothing that he has "made," yet, must we also remember that He, who perfectly knows the rule of equity, and necessarily judges of things as they are,—has complete power to execute justice according to that knowledge;—that he can neither be imposed on by deceit, nor moved by any bias either in the dispensing of rewards among the virtuous, or the inflicting of punishments among the wicked. "Far is it from GOD, that "He should do wickedly, and from "the ALMIGHTY, that He should "pervert judgment."—No surely;—"the work of a man will he render

" unto him, and cauſe every man to
" find, according to his ways."

The conſideration of GOD's Juſtice therefore may well alarm us, while his mercy alſo may ſerve to inſpire us with conſolation, and due caution in our proceedings.—And accordingly the prophet *Iſaiah* ſets forth the Juſtice of GOD and the aſtoniſhment of ſinners in very lively colours; when he repreſents the LORD of HOSTS as lifting up his banners, muſtering all his forces, and preparing the weapons of indignation to avenge himſelf on his adverſaries. " Howl ye, for the day of the
" LORD is at hand; it ſhall come as
" a deſtruction from the ALMIGHTY.
" Therefore ſhall all hands be faint,
" and every man's heart ſhall melt,
" and they ſhall be afraid; pangs and
" ſorrows ſhall take hold upon them,
" as upon a woman in travail; they

" ſhall be amazed at one another;
" and I will puniſh the world for their
" evil, and the wicked for their
" iniquity: the arrogance of the proud
" I will cauſe to ceaſe, and will lay
" low the haughtineſs of the terrible."
Every word in this magnificent deſcription breathes awe and terror.—Howling and deſtruction, fainting of hands, and melting of hearts, pangs and ſorrows, the throes of a woman in labour, and pains of a hard travail, amazement and confuſion, deſolation and final exciſion, are the ſeveral images which, put together by the prophet, make up in one exquiſite piece the tremendous ſcene of " the
" great and terrible day of the Lord."
--But on the other hand, ſee, contemplate, and rejoice in the bleſſed effects of a good life! That *ſame* Juſtice which looks ſo angrily upon the wicked, puts on another aſpect,

when it regards the righteous;—and like "the pillar of the cloud," ſheds a friendly light upon the one, while to the other it portends nothing but darkneſs and deſpair. "The Lord "is King," is an exclamation of the Pſalmiſt (full of joy)—"the earth "may be glad thereof; yea, the "multitude of the iſles may be "glad thereof." "Righteouſneſs and "judgment are the habitation of his "ſeat."—And indeed in all afflictions and oppreſſions that can befal men, what can be a greater conſolation to ſuch as are true of heart, than to conſider that "the LORD *is* KING;" whoſe juſtice calls upon him to regard, and whoſe power enables him to redreſs their greivances; who is ſeated on a throne from whence he can behold the wrongs they ſuffer, and can ſtretch out his arm to protect their perſons and vindicate their cauſe?—

Wherefore the ſame prophet who juſt now repreſented to us the *terrors* of the Lord, to reſtrain us from impiety, inſtructs us likewiſe in his gracious *promiſes*, to ſuccour us in our diſtreſſes, if we faithfully adhere to HIM, and to our duty. "Fear not thou" (ſaith the Lord) "for I am with thee:— "be not diſmayed, for I am thy "GOD.—I will ſtrengthen thee, I "will help thee; yea, I will uphold "thee with the right hand of my "righteouſneſs.—I will help thee "ſaith the LORD, and thy REDEEMER, "the HOLY ONE of *Iſrael*."—Enough ſurely, to alleviate all the ſorrows that can befal us here, and to furniſh us with an "hope full of immortality "hereafter."

SECTION X.

Concluding REFLECTIONS *upon the* ATTRIBUTES *of* GOD.

HAVING thus indulged ourſelves in a general view of the divine Attributes, a few words in concluſion upon this ſubject, will ſerve to bring home to our minds a welcome apprehenſion of the whole, as applied particularly to our preſent condition; inhabitants as we are of this world, dependent upon GOD *alone* for our well being here, and expectants of his promiſed bleſſings in the world to come. And if we take even the ſlighteſt ſurvey of the works of providence and creation, we cannot but perceive in them the plaineſt characters of all God's eſſential attributes, ſetting forth at once *his*

glory, and the happineſs of his creatures.—The ſun, the moon and other luminaries in heaven, whether planetary or fixed, with their different orders and revolutions; the air, and other bodies that occupy the ſpace between heaven and earth; the wonderful balancing of the winds, and gentle falling of the clouds in uſeful rain and ſhowers; the frame and ſituation of the earth; with the great variety of plants and trees, of rivers and fountains, men and other creatures that ſtock and adorn it; the ſubterraneous world, wherein are repoſited metals and minerals, ſalts, ſulphurs and ſtones, both precious and common, for the uſe and ornament of mankind; the wide and great deep alſo, ſtored as it is with treaſures, and fitted for the commerce of the different inhabitants of the world;—all theſe, or the leaſt individual of them,

if carefully enquired into, will abundantly proclaim the glory of God, and diſcover the wiſdom of his providence for the ſons of men, as well as the power and greatneſs of their CREATOR; as the holy writers, in the loftieſt ſtrains of eloquence have endeavoured to expreſs it. "HE "ſpreadeth out the heavens, and "treadeth upon the waves of the ſea; "HE maketh *Arcturus*, *Orion*, and "*Pleiades*, and the chambers of the "ſouth; HE doeth great things, paſt "finding out; yea, and wonders "without number.—HE ſtretcheth "out the north over the empty ſpace, "and hangeth the earth upon nothing: "HE bindeth up the waters in the "thick clouds, and the cloud is not "rent under them; HE hath com-"paſſed the waters with bounds, "until the day and night come to an "end. The pillars of heaven trem-

" ble, and are aſtoniſhed at his " reproof; HE divideth the ſea by his " power; by his SPIRIT HE hath gar- " niſhed the heavens.—Lo, theſe are " parts indeed of his ways!—but how " little a portion is heard of him?— " and the thunder of his power, who " can underſtand?"—But if (as ſome have done) we ſuppoſe other worlds beſides this, furniſhed with creatures whoſe fabric and motions, and conſequently their properties and operations, differ from what we ſee in us, how muſt this increaſe our ideas of God's power and wiſdom both in framing and governing ſuch a variety of different worlds! For if to keep *one* complicated machine in order be accounted a work of no ſmall ſkill, how extremely aſtoniſhing muſt it be to conſider what wiſdom and providence is requiſite to guide and overrule ſo many *millions* of engines (as

we may call them) and many of theſe endowed with liberty of will, in ſuch a manner as to make them all ſubſervient to his wiſe purpoſes, and decrees! "O Lord, how manifold are thy "works, in Wiſdom haſt thou made "them all;—the earth is FULL of thy "Goodneſs."

But if we conſider, ſecondly, the work of Man's REDEMPTION, we ſhall there find a further and much more intereſting diſplay of God's beſt attributes.—MAN had ſinned, and by his offence had ſtopped the effuſions of goodneſs, and opened a wide paſſage for divine wrath to fall upon him: —but how to ſave this creature, loſt and undone by his own choice, the invention of men and angels could not deviſe. Nay, heaven itſelf ſeemed to be divided. *Mercy* inclined to ſave: but *Juſtice* required a *ſatiſ-*

faction: and the difficulty was, how to anſwer the demands of the *one*, and not to deny the requeſts of the *other*.—In this exigence divine Mercy excited the divine Wiſdom to interpoſe as an arbiter; which, in the treaſure of its incomprehenſible light, found out an admirable expedient to ſave MAN, without prejudice to God's other perfections.—And *that* was, by conſtituting a proper MEDIATOR between the guilty creature and the Creator, that by transferring the puniſhment on the *ſurety*, God might puniſh ſin as *juſtice* demanded, and yet pardon the ſinner as *mercy* deſired.

Here then have we a full diſplay of all the moſt beloved Attributes of the Deity in our behalf; in God's taking occaſion from ſin, and the fall of Man, to magnify his own glory, and exalt his creature to a more excellent

ſtate; in ordaining *ſuch* a MEDIATOR as was qualified to reconcile God to man, by making expiation, and man to God, by making interceſſion, for him;—in cauſing to all appearance, ſuch oppoſite means to accompliſh ſuch glorious effects; and in laying the deſign of the GOSPEL in ſuch a manner, as both provides for the *comfort*, and at the ſame time promotes the *holineſs* of mankind.

Thus, which way ſoever we caſt our eyes, whether above us or beneath us, within us, or without us, we find ourſelves ſurrounded with the bleſſed effects of GOD's eternal goodneſs, power, and greatneſs.—That we are MEN, and not mere worms;—that we are not ſtones and clods of earth, utterly inſenſible of all good, and incapable of all felicity; that we are inſpired with IMMORTAL MINDS, and

endowed with vaſt capacities of happineſs; that we have ſo many ſenſible organs, capable of ſuch variety of pleaſures; and ſo many pleaſures to ſuit and entertain them; that we have life and motion, health and vigour, ſenſe and perception, reaſon and underſtanding, to guide and govern them:—that we are provided for the other world, as well as this, with an happineſs far above our largeſt comprehenſion, wiſhes, and deſires, and that we have the whole DIVINE ESSENCE in its reſpective characters, parts, and agencies—the SACRED TRINITY, employed and exerciſed in contriving, preparing, and accompliſhing our everlaſting felicity,—well may we exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches, "of the goodneſs and bounty of "God! how unſearchable are his "deſigns of kindneſs; and his ways "of beneficence paſt finding out!"—

" Bleſs therefore the Lord, O my " ſoul,—and forget not all his " benefits!"—but be mindful always what ſtrong motives they ought to be of love and imitation, faith and confidence, repentance and all holy living; —and in a devout and full ſenſe of *this*, " fear the LORD, and ſerve him " truly with all thine heart;—for " conſider what GREAT THINGS He " hath done for thee."

SECTION XI.

Of ATHEISM.

THUS have we conſidered ſome of the chief attributes of GOD, in order to raiſe up in our minds great and worthy apprehenſions of him,

and to beget in our hearts holy affections ſuitable to our condition and daily dependence on him.—That there ſhould be any perſons ſo blind and weak, as for a moment, even in thought, either to deny his Being, or to exclude his ſuperintending providence from the univerſe, may well excite our pity, aſtoniſhment, and concern.

That the ſubſtance of which the world is framed, exiſted from eternity, and that all the parts of it being in motion, after innumerable trials, ſo hampered themſelves together at laſt, as to fall into the happy order, in which we ſee things now;—that men firſt ſprung, like muſhrooms, out of the mud and ſlime of the earth; that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call the ſoul, are only the various actions and repercuſſions of ſmall particles of matter; that the whole

ſyſtem of the world, and every being therein, is nothing but mere matter and motion;—*matter* dividing itſelf into particles of ſuch and ſuch a figure, and *motion* directing itſelf into ſuch and ſuch tracts and turnings and deviations; that they dance and friſk about as they think fit, and yet keep every thing in due regularity, while either there is *no* God at all to ſuperintend them, or while the drowſy God ſits *ſleeping* in heaven, never taking part in theſe concerns,—theſe are ſome of the wild extravagant opinions of deluded ſpirits, the very mentioning of which, it may be hoped will be ſufficient to confute them.

For will any one ſeriouſly pretend that the great and curious ſtructure of the world was made by accident?—As well might he pretend that once upon a time, a certain quantity of

ſtone, and timber, iron, lead, and other materials, met happily together by chance at St. *Paul*'s, and there fell to work; the ſtones carving themſelves, the timber hewing itſelf, the iron and lead getting into their proper places, and ſo finiſhing that famous cathedral without the help of any architect.—And yet alas! what compariſon is there between the largeſt and moſt curious building in the world, and the immenſe fabric of the univerſe!—Beyond all credulity therefore, is the creduloufneſs of the atheiſt, whoſe imagination is ſo abſurdly ſtrong, as to believe that CHANCE could make a world, when it cannot build an houſe; that CHANCE could produce all plants, when it cannot paint a landſcape;—that CHANCE could form all animals, when it cannot ſo much as make a watch, or any other inanimate machine.

There may however be thoſe, who contenting themſelves with *words*, are for aſcribing the formation of the world to FATE or NATURE, rather than CHANCE.—They do right in objecting to the latter, as a *cauſe* of the world's exiſtence. For in fact CHANCE ſeems only to be a term, by which we expreſs our ignorance of the cauſe of any thing: it is in truth *nothing*;—nor can chance ever produce any thing of itſelf.—And yet as to FATE, *that* is nothing but a ſeries of events, and declares nothing concerning the *cauſe* of that connection, nor why it is.—And as to NATURE, whatever may be meant by it, the *laws* of Nature muſt neceſſarily imply ſome LEGISLATOR, and are conſequently poſterior to that which conſtituted them;—or if it be uſed to imply natural or ſecond cauſes, ſtill theſe are nothing but either the inanimate motions of ſenſeleſs matter, or

the voluntary motions of dependent creatures;—one, the direct operation, and the other, the free permiſſion of *Him* who ruleth over all.—So that to HIM we muſt at laſt be carried, in all our meditations and diſquiſitions upon this ſubject.

SECTION XII.

REFLECTION concerning ATHEISM.

WERE the belief of GOD's exiſtence a matter of ſpeculation only and of little real importance, a man might trifle with it and amuſe himſelf with his *motion* and his *atoms*, as long as he pleaſed: but ſince it is made a fundamental point of his SALVATION, he ſeems to run too great a hazard, who,

for the bare gratification of a fooliſh ſingularity adventures to deny it. For, beſides that he throws away the main comfort of his life, reſigns the ſatisfaction of a good conſcience, and quits the hope of a bleſſed eternity, he runs the riſque alſo of being for ever wretched in the world to come, and expoſes himſelf naked to the unquenchable indignation of an everlaſting God.—And for what end?—only to enjoy the pleaſures of a riotous and tumultuary life for a ſhort period, the gratifications of ſin but for a ſeaſon.—If however when he comes to conclude the ſcene, he ſhould find himſelf miſtaken in his atheiſtical confidence, and all things perfectly unlike to what he had ſtated and determined them in this world; if, inſtead of his beloved *ſleep* and inſenſibility, he ſhould find his ſoul ſtill ſubſiſting after his body, only removed into a

new and ſtrange place, amidſt a world of ſpirits, and entered upon an everlaſting and unchangeable ſtate of things; himſelf ſummoned to the tribunal of that GOD, whoſe being and authority he had ſo peremptorily affronted and denied, and thence tranſmitted to a painful eternity, there to languiſh without end in unpitied woes, and fruitleſs lamentations,—how ſadly would he be diſappointed, and ſurpriſed with terrors on every ſide, to find himſelf thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a ſtate of ruin and deſperation!

And thus it may happen for any thing he knows to the contrary:—for, as we cannot by our conceits and fancies call things into being, ſo neither can we unmake them, or make them vaniſh into nothing, by the ſtubborn confidence of our imagination.—What

is it then that makes him thus foolhardy, and tempts him to this dangerous riſque and venture? He will tell you it is to ſet the world free from the prejudices of vulgar errors, and the ſlavery of that bug-bear, conſcience. —Ah wretched freedom! which to deliver us from one imaginary evil, brings upon us a thouſand real miſchiefs; degrades the dignity of human nature, ſaps the foundation of all ſocieties, opens a paſſage to all kinds of wickedneſs, and takes away from man his *only* comfort in diſtreſs.— For ſince of himſelf he is infinitely inſufficient for his own happineſs, is liable to unnumbered ills which he can neither prevent nor remedy; is full of wants which he cannot ſupply; ſurrounded with infirmities, which he cannot remove; ſubject to dangers, which he can by no method eſcape,— whither can he turn himſelf without a

GOD,—or where repoſe his anxious thoughts, but in the DIVINE PROVIDENCE?—In the day of adverſity eſpecially, when all other friends are apt to leave him, how dark and gloomy muſt every thing appear about him, without GOD!—An unhappy mortal deep ſunk in miſery and misfortune, ſtruggling with innumerable afflictions here on earth, and at the ſame time deſtitute of a friend in heaven, is in a condition not to be imagined without horror.—But now, even in this melancholy ſtate of things, when any one lifts up his eyes to heaven, he will find vaſt and inconceivable comforts flowing in upon him; when he conſiders that Omnipotence, directed by unerring wiſdom, and incited by unbounded goodneſs, is engaged in his favour, and *under covenant* to ſuccour and relieve him. Supported by this perſuaſion, he can

patiently ſuffer all things, with a cheerful reſignation to the divine will, having a ſecret ſpring of ſpiritual joy, and the continual feaſt of a good conſcience within, that forbid him to be miſerable.—For it is GOD, "our "MAKER," (as one of the ſpeakers in *Job* expreſſes it), "who giveth "ſongs in the night,"—the night of affliction, and in the gloomineſs of human deſpair.

PART THE SECOND.

SECTION I.

Of GOD as the moral GOVERNOR of the UNIVERSE.

THE creation of the world neceſſarily brings with it the conſideration of a divine providence to ſupport and to preſerve it, in the intended purpoſes of its being. And as this is continually to be ſeen in the material parts of the univerſe, ſo alſo does it as conſtantly follow in the moral government thereof.

And accordingly we find abundant evidences of ſuch a ſuperintendance.

If we conſider man in a ſocial capacity, we find the corruption of his nature to be ſuch, ſome ſpirits ſo fiery, and others poſſeſſed with ſuch a ſettled malignity of diſpoſition, as would make thoſe of a different temper in the world very unhappy, did not God conſtantly reſerve to himſelf a power of interpoſing. The world would ſoon become a field of blood; and fraud and violence the principal actors in it, were it once abandoned by the divine providence.—That therefore it is kept in ſuch good order as to make it even a tolerable habitation for the time we are to continue here;—that the wicked have not always their will, and that the innocent fall not univerſally a prey to the oppreſſor, is entirely owing to that divine wiſdom which diſappointeth the devices of the one, and to that divine goodneſs which

takes the other under its protection, and to thoſe that have no might, encreaſeth ſtrength:—for "God preſerveth thoſe that love him, and "ſcattereth abroad all the ungodly."

And if we conſider man in a more private capacity, the operations of a providence to conduct and to direct him are no leſs manifeſtly conſpicuous. The many accidents of life, eſpecially thoſe of infancy, expoſe him to ſo great and continual dangers, that, to human appearance, it is ſcarcely poſſible he ſhould avoid them all with ſafety, if a particular providence (however inviſible the methods of it may be, and paſt our finding out) ſhould not interfere to protect and to deliver him.

Still further;—if we conſider man as a religious creature, capable of

worſhipping and doing honour to God, how reaſonable ſoever this capacity may be of itſelf, yet, without the belief of a providential moral government in the univerſe, it would be of little or no uſe. For, as the Roman orator* well expreſſes it, if "the Gods do not extend their care "and their inſpection to the affairs of "human life, what piety, what holi-"neſs, what religion will there be in "the world? If they cannot, or if "they will not, concern themſelves "with our neceſſities, to aid and ſuc-"cour us, if they take no notice of "our actions, what advantage is it to "honour them, to build temples and "pray to them? And if, by a juſt "conſequence, we thus take all reli-"gion out of the world, there will be "nothing left among men but diſor-

* Cicero, de nat. Deor.

" ders, troubles, and confuſions; and " all ſincerity, ſecurity, and ſociety " will be baniſhed from the earth." Such are the concluſions that our very reaſon dictates, if we acknowledge not a providence watching over every thing that happens in the world, and directing all events to their proper and reſpective ends.

And, as the conſtant preſervation of the world, ſo the ſtrange and wonderful occurrences that ſometimes happen in it, are a convincing proof of a divine providence ruling over it. In a natural and ordinary way God cures diſeaſes, and ſends rain or dry weather, feeds the hungry, and puniſhes the wicked by famine, and by peſtilence. But ſometimes he alters theſe ordinary methods;—to ſignalize his mercy or his judgments:—as

when CHRIST fed ſo many thouſands in the wilderneſs; and when GOD rained down fire upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, by a particular and miraculous diſpenſation.—For miracles are God's wonderful works, when he interpoſes in an extraordinary manner, and deviates from the method uſually preſcribed to himſelf in the common courſe of events. And we muſt either flatly deny all human teſtimony, and condemn the records of every age for cheats and impoſtures, or we muſt allow that there have been ſundry miracles performed in the world;—any one of which, among thoſe many that have been ſo well atteſted, being acknowledged to be true, *that one* is a ſufficient argument of an over-ruling providence.

The proofs of ſuch an exiſting agency in the moral regulation of the

univerſe, which way ſoever we turn our obſervation, come ſtrong upon us: and whether we look up to God and his attributes, or to ourſelves, and our capacities;—into the ſenſe of ſcripture, or the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, the conſtant courſe of nature, or the miraculous interruptions of it, the common and ordinary events, or the great and wonderful occurrences that happen in the world, we have ſufficient grounds to conclude, that this is a principle wherein all mankind are agreed; and that no nation was ever yet ſo barbarous, if their notions and practices were ſufficiently enquired into, as not to be perſuaded that the world was governed by ſome excellent and ſuperior Being; their prayers and invocations, their oblations and ſacrifices being all direct acknowledgements of a providence; ſhewing that, with the ſame eyes, wherewith they ſaw God

in his works, they could perceive him there directing every thing, and encompaſſing every thing with the immenſe extent of his ſuperintending power and wiſdom.

SECTION II.

Of the Groundwork of a REVELATION.

FROM a Being of a nature infinitely perfect, muſt proceed all things that are beſides, with their perfections; among which, thoſe of wiſdom, juſtice, mercy, and truth, muſt be derived from him, as the author of all thoſe perfections, of which the creatures are capable. And it is abſurd to imagine that the creator of the world, and the righteous governor of

it, who is infinitely more juſt, more good, and wiſe, and holy, than any creature can be, will not at laſt reward the good, and puniſh the wicked. Is it to be ſuppoſed that the wiſe and good God would create men only to abuſe themſelves and one another? to live a while in ſin and folly here, and ſome of them in the moſt extravagant and brutal wickedneſs, and then go down to the grave, and ſo there ſhould be an end of them for ever? What is there worthy of the infinite wiſdom of God, in ſo poor a deſign as this! Doth not the voice of nature itſelf teach us, and has it not been the general belief and expectation of all ages and nations, that ſinners muſt ſuffer in another world for what they have done amiſs in this? and, that all is not to paſs away with us in ſport, extravagance, laughter, noiſe, riot, violence, and

cruelty, as ſome men are willing to believe, and gladly would teach others?

It appears moreover from the common belief and experience of mankind, that as there is a God of all goodneſs and holineſs; ſo there are wicked and malicious ſpirits, which are ever contriving the miſchief and ruin of men. For beſides the evidence of this from ſcripture, which we muſt be allowed to alledge here at leaſt in the way of an hiſtory, it is folly to imagine that there was no ground nor foundation for ſuch a belief, as has prevailed in all nations and ages of the world, and for the cuſtoms and practices which followed thereupon,—that there are *Dæmons*, or ſpirits, of an evil and malicious diſpoſition and power. We need inſtance only in the unnatural cruelties, which the heathen world, even the *Greeks* and *Romans* themſelves, were

continually incited to perform by the inſtigation of theſe malicious and wicked ſpirits. For it is well known that they offered up multitudes of innocent men and women, and even their own children, in ſacrifice to their falſe Gods;—which ſeems to imply ſomething ſo much beyond mere *ignorance* and *ſuperſtition*, as can hardly be accounted for on any other ſuppoſition, but that of the exiſtence of evil ſpirits, and their baneful influence upon the minds of men.—The dominion of *Satan* is now indeed reſtrained by the over-ruling power of the Goſpel:—but we have ſtill as great evidence from all *hiſtory*, that there are ſuch beings as Devils, as we have for any other matter of fact whatever. And if "the Devil," after ſo much human blood as he has cauſed to be ſpilt in his ſacrifices, and after ſo many

falſe oracles and impoſtures, can yet perſuade ſome men that there is no ſuch being as himſelf, this is one of his moſt ſubtle ſtratagems of all, and proves what influence, though in a different kind and manner, he ſtill retains over the minds of men.

Since therefore it is moſt certain, that there is a Being of infinite power and wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs; and that there is likewiſe a malicious cruel ſpirit, ever watchful and induſtrious to miſlead and to deſtroy mankind: it is highly reaſonable to believe, that a Being of ſuch perfections, after he had created man, would communicate himſelf to him, would ſet him a rule by which he ought to live, and preſcribe him laws, whereby he might attain that happineſs which he was made capable of and deſigned for by his maker. We cannot ſuppoſe that

the God of all goodneſs and wiſdom would create man, and then leave him to himſelf, to follow his own inventions, and to live at random, without any law or direction whereby to regulate his actions; expoſed in the mean while to all the aſſaults of an implacable ſubtle enemy, without any caution and inſtruction given him, or any help and aſſiſtance afforded for his defence.

Man even in his innocence, was not thus to be left to himſelf. And we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, even though we had not the expreſs word of ſcripture for it, that the God of infinite goodneſs would not diſregard the univerſal corruptneſs of mankind; but would uſe ſome means to reclaim them from the error of their ways, to bring them to a knowledge of themſelves, and of

the divine majeſty, to inform them of their duty, and direct them to happineſs.

How Man became ſo prone to evil as we are ſenſible he is, we can know only by revelation; but to ſuppoſe him placed in this condition, without all help or remedy, is to entertain a very unworthy ſentiment of our Creator;—to charge him fooliſhly, if not wickedly. It is evident that man is, of himſelf, in a miſerable and helpleſs condition; and conſidering the great ignorance and wickedneſs, which have been, from the fall of our firſt parents, continually viſible in the world, and ſtill reign in it;—conſidering, the *notorious* wickedneſs and *groſs* ignorance of men, which, from the earlieſt records of antiquity, have continued down to our own times, nothing is more reaſonable than to think, that a

Being of infinite perfection would take ſome care to rectify the miſtakes, and reform the manners of his creatures. For can we believe it conſiſtent with infinite truth, never to manifeſt itſelf in the world, but to ſuffer all ſorts of men, of all nations, to be expoſed to all the deſigns and deluſions of impoſtors, and of ſeducing and apoſtate ſpirits, without any ſufficient means afforded them to undeceive and reſcue themſelves? Can we ſuppoſe that a GOD of infinite majeſty and power, a "Jealous GOD," one who will not "give his honour to "another," ſhould ſuffer the world to be guilty of idolatry, to make themſelves Gods of wood and ſtone? nay, to offer their ſons and daughters to devils, and to commit all manner of wickedneſs in the worſhip of their falſe Gods; to make murder, and adultery, and the worſt of vices, not

only their practice but their religion? Can we imagine, that the true God would behold all this, for so many ages, among so many people, and yet not concern himself to put a stop to so much wickedness, to vindicate his own honour, and restore the sense and practice of virtue upon earth?

To own the Being of a God, and yet to deny a providence, is so great an absurdity, that none of the philosophers, but *Epicurus*, were guilty of it; and this was looked upon, in him, as amounting to the denial of the divine existence. But to grant both the being and the providence of God, and yet to confine the divine care and providence to the bodies only, and outward condition of men; and to imagine that the spiritual and immortal part of Man is disregarded or neglected by him, is no less an absur-

dity than wholly to deny his providence or his exiſtence; becauſe *this* is to deny the moſt conſiderable and ineſtimable part of providence, that which concerns our ſouls, and our eternal welfare; and therefore it is, by conſequence, to deny the attributes of God, and to repreſent him not as he is in himſelf, but as unwiſe, unmerciful, and unholy.—To ſay that there is *no ſuch thing* as a DIVINE REVELATION, is no better, in effect, than ATHEISM: for whoever can be of this opinion, muſt believe only the being of ſuch Gods as *Epicurus* owned, who never concerned themſelves with the affairs of men:—which was, in other words, to ſay that they were no Gods at all.

SECTION III.

Of RELIGION in general; and its DIVISIONS.

RELIGION we regard as founded in the conſideration of the SUPREME BEING, and ourſelves; of his nature and our own; and of that mutual relation which ſubſiſts between them. —But more eſpecially to *us*, in the general application of the term, it is the obligation of rational creatures to render unto GOD ſuch acts of worſhip, homage, and obedience, as are ſuitable to the excellence of *his* nature, and the manner of *our* dependence on him. —And without doubt, if we contemplate him, as our creator, the author of our nature, and of all the faculties belonging to it;—ourſelves

as created by him, the iſſue of his power, the workmanſhip of his hands; —him as our protector, governor, and maſter;—ourſelves as his dependents, ſubjects, and ſervants;—him as our benefactor, and the author of our happineſs; ourſelves as obliged and indebted to him for every thing which we enjoy; we cannot but perceive that not only all the outward acts of worſhip, ſuch as adoration and invocation of him, thankſgiving and acknowledgement to him, but all thoſe inward acts of religion alſo, ſuch as faith and hope, love and fear, truſt, reliance and obedience, with whatever elſe reſults from a due exerciſe of our reaſon, and a full conſideration of his attributes, become matter of neceſſary and indiſpenſible duty to us.

Such being the nature and origin of religion in general; if we regard it

under its primary diviſion, it is to be conſidered by us as partly natural, and partly revealed. The *natural* part of it is that, which we come to the knowledge of, by the principles of reaſon only, in the contemplation of the works, the nature, and providence of God.—The *revealed* is that, which in ſome points we could not have known at all; and in all, not near ſo clearly, had it not been God's pleaſure to declare it to us. In the former is required a due exerciſe of our intellectual faculties;—in the latter, beſides this, a firm dependence on the authority of God, and a due ſubmiſſion to whatever has the evidence of his atteſtation; whether it be altogether commenſurate with our finite underſtanding, or whether, from its own nature, it be infinitely exceeding it.

As to "the light of nature," we ſeem to attribute the utmoſt that can

in reaſon be aſcribed to it, even if we take into our view the whole amount of *all* that has been collectively ſuggeſted, or thought *probable* concerning it, by the wiſeſt Heathens,--if we ſay, that it diſcovers to us the Being of a God, and the infinite perfections of the divine nature; particularly his Goodneſs, which inclines him to reward thoſe that diligently obey and ſerve him; and his Juſtice, which requires him to puniſh thoſe that diſobey him: —and that, ſeeing theſe things do not regularly take place in this world, we conſequently infer, there is a part of man, which will ſubſiſt hereafter, of a nature capable of receiving theſe rewards or puniſhments:—which therefore leads us to the immortality of the ſoul, as a matter of high *probability* and *conjecture*.—And this ſyſtem of principles; with a ſuitable mode of practice following them, it is, which

we call *natural* Religion;—to diſtinguiſh it from *ſupernatural* REVELATION, which we call *revealed* Religion.

The great difference between the objects of natural REASON and REVELATION, that is, of *human* knowledge and *divine*, is, that in the former, there is a ſpacious field for *new* acquiſitions and improvements.—Experience, obſervation, and induſtry make freſh diſcoveries in thoſe things which are the proper ſubjects of them; penetration into one effect or cauſe helps to explain another, as in the caſe of arts, ſciences, and natural philoſophy; the progreſs alſo of one age in real learning, is of great benefit to ſucceeding ages: and, while the mind buſies itſelf in inquiries after uſeful wiſdom, it will by reflection, demonſtration, experiments, and hiſtorical obſervations, *add* to its former ſtore; and by having

larger views, more objects, and ideas, and conſequently more truths, to ſpeculate and reaſon upon, greatly extend its comprehenſion and knowledge.

But in reſpect to *divine*, inviſible objects, it is far otherwiſe.—The boundary is there *fixed*; our enquiries limited to what is *revealed*, and all further ſearch is vain, and unlawful. Theſe things are *above* the diſcovery of Reaſon; it has no principles from which it can regularly deduce them by any *natural* uſe of its faculties; and without *ſupernatural* inſtruction, it can never gain the leaſt knowledge or probability concerning them. It is impoſſible for any idea, notion, or apprehenſion of them to enter the mind, but by the mediation of ſome *external* agency. So that all we *do* know, or can *hope* to know, concerning

them in *this* world, is from REVELATION. Reaſon indeed, or the workings of an inquiſitive ſagacious mind, may improve *itſelf*, but not the ſubject: it may diſcover variety of arguments to explain the beauties, and ſhew the neceſſity of ſupernatural truths; but it cannot add *one* to the original ſtock; nor ſpeak a word concerning their eſſence, or their nature, beyond what Revelation teaches. So that "REVE-
"LATION (in Mr. *Locke*'s words)
"is nothing but natural Reaſon
"*enlarged* by a *new* ſet of diſco-
"veries, communicated immediately
"by GOD;—which Reaſon vouches
"the truth of, by the teſtimony and
"proof it gives, that they come from
"GOD.

SECTION IV.

Of a REVELATION from GOD, as poſſible, probable, and neceſſary.

THAT a ſupernatural method of revealing to mankind God's will, is *poſſible*, ſeems to be very evident from conſidering the nature of God, and the capacities of men.—An infinite Being, that created our ſouls capable of knowing and loving him, can never be ſuppoſed to want power to communicate greater light to our underſtandings, and to make known to us farther diſcoveries of his will and pleaſure. And man, thus made after *his* image, can at all times uſe thoſe faculties he is endowed with, both in receiving, and delivering, the matter of the revelation, when it is ſet before

him in a manner properly adapted to thoſe faculties.

That a revelation of God's will ſhould be eſteemed *probable*, is very juſtly to be inferred from that great ignorance, and univerſal corruption of human nature, which *we* indeed know how to account for; but which was manifeſt to, and acknowledged by, even thoſe of old, who were nevertheleſs unacquainted with its cauſe and origin.—We ſpeak here of mankind as it is found *in fact* (ſetting aſide the advantages of revelation), wicked, and propenſe to wickedneſs,—in the "ſnares of the devil,—taken captive "by him at his will,"—and unable to "work out their own ſalvation." And that this has at all times been the caſe is undeniable.—But if human nature *alone* has been ſufficient for the entire purpoſes of reſtoration to

its own original integrity, and loſt perfection, why has this *always* been the condition of mankind?—Alas! this is the very aggravation of our miſery,—that we *are* naturally thus wretched, and that we *cannot* help it. —That extraordinary means of recovery, therefore, ſhould be vouchſafed by God, is ſtrongly to be expected from his infinite and acknowledged goodneſs: his providence not only extending its concern and care to the bodies of men, and to their outward conditions in this world, but chiefly to their immortal ſouls, and to their happineſs in the world to come: on which account, rational creatures, plunged in miſery, become, in a particular degree, fit objects of the divine care and compaſſion.—For though *natural* light convinces us of the exiſtence of a Deity, and ſhews us how reaſonable it is to pay our adorations

to that power which created, and ſtill preſerves us, yet it does not ſufficiently direct us in the way and manner of performing it: though it may give us ſome *hopes* of pardon upon our repentance, from the general notion of God's goodneſs, yet it preſcribes to us no *certain* method for the obtaining our reconciliation. Revelation therefore appears abſolutely *neceſſary*, both to relieve the wants of men in a ſtate of nature, and to recover the luſtre and brightneſs of their original principles, impaired and ſullied by the degeneracy of mankind; to add alſo ſuch further improvements as may be perfective of human nature, to inſtruct men in the method of appeaſing an offended Deity, and of obtaining for themſelves the full and perfect ends of their creation.

It appears therefore that additional means of information beſides the mere

diſcoveries of unaided reaſon, are certainly within the *reach* of an all-powerful God to give;—that the want of them to a ſunk and degraded race of reaſonable beings, upon the ſcore of his unbounded Goodneſs, makes it highly *probable* that God ſhould, in ſuch a manner as he ſees moſt fitting, graciouſly vouchſafe to grant the ſame; while the abſolute impoſſibility of man's being able to recover his *loſt* nature by his own exertions *only*, makes it *neceſſary* that from God ſhould come his help and remedy in his weakneſs.

It is plain then, that, though we had never heard a of ſuch a thing as a Miracle, or a Prophecy, or of *revealed* Religion; yet from the conſideration of the ſtate of the world, and the great ignorance and corruption of human nature, it would be reaſonable to

expect that God ſhould *ſome* way make known his will to mankind; and we cannot reconcile it to his attributes, nor conceive how it ſhould be conſiſtent with them, for him to be an unconcerned ſpectator of ſo much folly and wickedneſs, without taking any care to remedy it. God indeed cannot be obliged to *force* men to obey his commandments, and comply with his will; he muſt rather leave it to their own *option*, whether they will be happy or miſerable: but it was neceſſary to *propoſe* the terms of Salvation to them, to offer them their free choice;—to ſet before them life and death, bleſſings and curſings, and ſo,—to make the obſtinate without excuſe.

SECTION V.

Of the poſſible MEANS *of affording a* REVELATION.

THE methods by which an extraordinary diſcovery of God's will may be made to men, appear to be but two;—either an immediate revelation, by inſpiration or otherwiſe, to each individual ſeparately;—or elſe, a commiſſion, with indiſputable credentials, beſtowed on *ſome*, to convince *others*, that they come from God, to inſtruct them in what he has revealed either by himſelf, or by the communication of Angels.

But it cannot ſeem requiſite that God ſhould immediately inſpire, or make a direct revelation to every

particular perſon in the world: For either he muſt ſo powerfully influence their minds and affections, as to take away their choice and freedom of acting (which would be to offer violence to human nature); or elſe men would, for the moſt part, have gone on in their wicked courſes ſtill, and have denied God in their lives, though their underſtandings were ever ſo clearly and fully convinced of his will and commandments, as well as of his "eternal power and God-head." For, as St. *Paul* teſtifies, the Heathens themſelves were not ignorant of the being of God; but "when they *knew* God, they glori-"fied him *not* as GOD."—No man can be more certain of any inſpiration he can receive, than he is of the Being of that God from whom he receives it; and therefore he who denies the being of God, muſt by conſequence

deny the truth of any ſuch inſpiration; unleſs it have that powerful impulſe upon his mind, as both to convince him, and *force* him to an acknowledgement at once of the being of God, and of the operation of the divine Spirit upon his ſoul. And it is hard to conceive how any inſpiration, which doth not over-rule the will and affections, as well as convince the underſtanding, ſhould be of more efficacy upon the minds and lives of ſuch men, than the notion of "a "God" is. For if men can ſo ſtifle the notion of a GOD within their minds, as to doubt whether there be any ſuch BEING or no, or at leaſt to act as if there were *none*; no reaſon can be given why they might not as well act againſt *any* conviction, which they might receive by inſpiration, or any other way of immediate revelation (unleſs it had an irreſiſtible effect upon

them), and either take it all for fancy and deluſion; or elſe ſo harden themſelves againſt it, as not to be reclaimed by it. But above all, profane perſons, and obſtinate unbelievers can have leaſt reaſon to expect that God would vouchſafe to *them* an immediate revelation. It being in the general diſpenſations of his providence, to "give "over ſuch perſons to a reprobate "mind, to their own hearts luſt," —to abandon them to the tyranny of their ſins, ſince they will take no notice of his works, nor "abide his "counſels." His "SPIRIT will not "always *ſtrive* with man;" he withdraws his ordinary grace from thoſe who abuſe it;—and it can never be preſumed he would confer higher favours upon them.

But even if God were willing to vouchſafe ſome immediate revelation

of himſelf to theſe inſolent offenders, and blaſphemers of his name and authority, how can we be aſſured that they would be converted? Would they not rather find out ſome pretence to perſuade themſelves that it was no *real* revelation, but the effect of natural agents, or of melancholy, and a diſturbed imagination?

They might be terrified perhaps for the preſent, but it is much to be apprehended, from what we all know of the infirmity and depravity of mankind, that they would ſoon ſtifle their apprehenſions with their accuſtomed arguments for Atheiſm and Infidelity.

But beſides being ineffectual, and never to be expected by ſuch as this conceit muſt be calculated for; the ſuppoſition of immediate revelations to every man in particular, would fill

the world with continual impoſtures and deluſions. For if every one had a revelation made to himſelf, every one might pretend to others what he pleaſed; and one man might be deluded by the pretence of a revelation made to another, againſt an expreſs revelation made to himſelf; which we may conclude would often happen, from what we every day experience: for if men can be perverted by the arts and inſinuations of others, againſt their own Reaſon and Judgment, they might as well be prevailed upon to act againſt a revelation made to them; though Revelations were things as common and familiar amongſt men, as Reaſon itſelf is.

So that immediate revelations to every particular man would have been needleſs and ſuperfluous; they would have been unſuitable to the majeſty

and honour of God; and they would have been ineffectual to the ends for which they muſt be ſuppoſed to be deſigned, and would have given many more pretences to impoſtures than there are now in the world.

SECTION VI.

Of the METHOD actually ADOPTED;— PROPHECY, and MIRACLES.

THE method, however, actually made uſe of by Almighty God for the revelation of his will, both in times paſt, and in theſe later days, wherein he has ſpoken to us by his SON, has been that before-mentioned, of qualifying certain perſons to declare his will to others, by infallible ſigns

and evidences of his authority and commiſſion. For which purpoſe no means are ſo proper and convincing as thoſe ſupernatural gifts and powers ordinarily underſtood by the terms PROPHECY, and MIRACLES.

That *Prophecies* and *Miracles* are the moſt fitting and proper means for God to uſe in revealing himſelf to the world, is evident from their not being ſubject to any of thoſe inconveniences, which immediate revelations to each perſon, would unavoidably be expoſed to.—There is no Prophecy, nor Miracle, which has not the deſigned effect upon many perſons: the honour and majeſty of God is not ſubject to the ſcorn of every profane and obſtinate offender; and there is as effectual care taken to prevent impoſtures, as poſſibly there could have been. And as Prophecies and Miracles

have none of the inconveniences of immediate revelations, ſo have they manifeſtly all the advantage and utility, which it can be ſuppoſed ſuch revelations would have had, in being granted to every perſon in particular. They prove the *immediate* action and authority of GOD,—which is the only effect deſigned by any mode of revelation whatever.

True Prophecies are of ſuch a nature, that none but GOD omniſcient could be the author of them; and theſe, in their accompliſhment, muſt carry an indiſputable evidence of divine revelation along with them.—Such are the predictions of things to be fulfilled many ages afterwards, which in the fulfilling, depend upon the counſels and determinations of *free* agents; and predictions of the *ſins* of men, which they could not be deter-

mined to, but by their own choice.—It is above the capacity of human underſtanding, to conceive how it is poſſible, that things ſhould be foreſeen ſo long before either the actions or the agents themſelves have any exiſtence; or how *contingencies* can be the object of infallible preſcience: and therefore for God to *foretel* things of this nature by his Prophets, is a moſt proper and certain way of revelation; becauſe it is above the power of any finite being to do the like. It is the prerogative of HIM that "formeth the "mountains, and createth the wind, "to declare unto man what is his "thought: the LORD, the God of "Hoſts, is his name."—As for thoſe things which, having been foretold, come to paſs by chance, or which it may be imagined evil ſpirits may be able to foretel, when they are in agitation, and perhaps juſt ready for

action; or probable gueſſes from the various accidental circumſtances of the world, we ſay nothing of them here;—being well aſſured, from the conſideration of the divine attributes of goodneſs and truth, that God will not ſuffer *falſe* religions to be impoſed upon the world under his *own* name, by diabolical predictions, without affording to mankind the means of *diſcovering* them to be ſuch.

But conſidering the true Prophecies,—thoſe which are avowedly eſteemed, and have been proved to *be* ſo, we can ſafely ſay, that when ſuch are delivered by *many* Prophets, in *divers* ages, and different places, all teaching the *ſame* doctrine, all tending to the *ſame* end and deſign, in their ſeveral revelations, and *that* end the diſcouragement of all wickedneſs, with the maintenance of all virtue and true

religion,—*theſe* prophecies have *all* the evidence that can be requiſite to aſſure us that they are from GOD: and God, by ſuffering them to be fulfilled, and to paſs ſo long in the world under his own name, with all the characters of his authority upon them, gives us all poſſible aſſurance that they are *his*; and engages us hereby, in honour to his divine attributes, to believe that they are really founded in, and ſupported by, *his* authority.

And, the certainty of Prophecies being thus grounded upon the divine attributes, beſides the direct evidence which they afford to whatever is delivered by them, they add alſo an undeniable confirmation to thoſe Miracles which have been foretold, and are wrought at the time, and in the manner, and by perſons, foretold by the Prophets. And the Prophecies

likewiſe receive as great a confirmation from ſuch Miracles. For Prophecies and Miracles, which are *ſingly* a ſufficient evidence of divine revelation, do *mutually* ſupport and confirm each other; ſo that we have hereby all the aſſurance that can be expected of any divine revelation. And therefore, as *Prophecy* is in itſelf a moſt fitting and proper way of revelation; ſo, in conjunction with *Miracles*, it is the moſt certain method that can be deſired, for making known the will of GOD to Man.

SECTION VII.

Of MIRACLES.

THE fitneſs and efficacy of *Miracles* to give proof of a divine revelation, ſeem to be very evident upon the ſlighteſt conſideration of the ſubject; according to the ordinary acceptation of the term. For it would be an extravagant thing to imagine that God ſhould exclude *himſelf* from the works of his own creation; or, that he ſhould eſtabliſh them upon ſuch inviolable laws, as not to be capable of being altered upon ſome occaſions, when he foreſaw it would be requiſite to alter them. For unleſs the courſe of nature had been thus alterable, it would have been defective in regard to one great end, for which it

was deſigned; that is, it would have failed of being ſerviceable to the deſigns of Providence upon *all* occaſions.

We cannot ſcruple therefore to believe that the ſame infinite wiſdom which contrived laws for the order and courſe of nature, contrived them ſo, as to make them *alterable*, when it would be neceſſary for God, by ſuſpending the powers, or interrupting the courſe, of nature, to manifeſt his *extraordinary* will and power; and that by the ſame decree whereby he firſt eſtabliſhed them, he ſubjected them to ſuch alterations, as in his wiſdom he foreſaw would be neceſſary. Nor can we any more doubt, but that HE who made the world, has the ſole power and authority over it; and that nothing can be done in it, but by his direction and influence, or at leaſt

by his permiſſion; and that the frame and order of nature which he at firſt appointed, can at no time be altered, but for *great* ends and purpoſes. God is not given to change, as men are; and can never be diſappointed in his eternal purpoſes and deſigns. When therefore any thing comes to paſs above the courſe of nature, as we ſpeak, and contrary to it, in confirmation of a revelation, which, for the importance and excellency of the ſubject of it, and in all other reſpects, is moſt *worthy* of God, we may be *ſure* that this is his doing.—And there is ſtill farther evidence of it, if this revelation were of old announced by prophets, who *foretold* that it ſhould be confirmed by Miracles.—Thus when men born blind, received their ſight; when others were cured of the moſt deſperate diſeaſes, by a touch, or at a diſtance; when the dead were

raiſed, and devils caſt out; theſe were evident ſigns of a divine power and preſence, which gave teſtimony to the doctrine delivered by thoſe, by whom ſuch miracles were wrought, and the divine commiſſion and authority produced, for what they did and taught.—This was giving witneſs and credibility to the things revealed, in a language much more powerful than any human voice; whilſt God ſhewed forth his glory, and made known his will, by exerciſing his ſovereignty over nature, in making the whole *creation* bow, and tremble, and *obey*.—All which was performed according to expreſs prophecies concerning CHRIST, that there might be a viſible concurrence both of prophecies and miracles in atteſtation of him. And this diſpenſation of Miracles had this particular advantage and propriety attending it, that it was

admirably well fitted to propagate a religion which concerned the poor, as well as the rich, the unlearned, as well the learned: being equally adapted to awaken the attention, to command and challenge the aſſent of men of all conditions and capacities. For miraculous effects are obvious to the moſt ignorant of mankind; yet ſuch as may ſatisfy the wiſeſt of them, and confute or ſilence the moſt captious and contentious.

SECTION VIII.

Of diſtinguiſhing TRUE *MIRACLES from* FALSE ONES.

THE only difficulty concerning miracles conſiſts in knowing how to diſtinguiſh *true* from *pretended* ones; —thoſe which have been wrought in

confirmation of the true religion, from ſuch as have been done, or are pretended to have been done, in behalf of any falſe religion.

How far God may permit the devil, or his agents, to proceed in matters of this nature, we cannot comprehend. We have, however, his divine attributes engaged for our ſecurity, that he will not ſuffer us to be deluded by falſe miracles, wrought under a pretence of his own authority, without any poſſibility of diſcovering the impoſture. And though, for wiſe ends, he may ſuffer wicked men to perform ſome things that may ſeem to be very wonderful, yet he always takes care to place a mark of diſtinction between what is done for the atteſtation of a lie, and the confirmation of the truth.

Let us adduce, then, a ſtrong caſe upon the ſubject:—that of the Magi-

admirably well fitted to propagate a religion which concerned the poor, as well as the rich, the unlearned, as well the learned: being equally adapted to awaken the attention, to command and challenge the aſſent of men of all conditions and capacities. For miraculous effects are obvious to the moſt ignorant of mankind; yet ſuch as may ſatisfy the wiſeſt of them, and confute or ſilence the moſt captious and contentious.

SECTION VIII.

Of diſtinguiſhing TRUE *MIRACLES from* FALSE ONES.

THE only difficulty concerning miracles conſiſts in knowing how to diſtinguiſh *true* from *pretended* ones; —thoſe which have been wrought in

confirmation of the true religion, from ſuch as have been done, or are pretended to have been done, in behalf of any falſe religion.

How far God may permit the devil, or his agents, to proceed in matters of this nature, we cannot comprehend. We have, however, his divine attributes engaged for our ſecurity, that he will not ſuffer us to be deluded by falſe miracles, wrought under a pretence of his own authority, without any poſſibility of diſcovering the impoſture. And though, for wiſe ends, he may ſuffer wicked men to perform ſome things that may ſeem to be very wonderful, yet he always takes care to place a mark of diſtinction between what is done for the atteſtation of a lie, and the confirmation of the truth.

Let us adduce, then, a ſtrong caſe upon the ſubject:—that of the Magi-

cians in *Egypt* attempting to ſupport their own falſe Gods and worſhip, againſt the pretenſions of *Moſes* to a higher claim of attention than themſelves.

The hiſtory informs us that they were permitted to proceed to the fulleſt extent and compaſs of their art, and that they held on with *Moſes*, as long as poſſibly they could. The reſult was, that the victory obtained over them by *Moſes*, confirmed too by their own confeſſion, was more illuſtrious than if they had not entered into a conteſt with him.—And ſo far good aroſe from the competition.

But the great difference between them ſeems to have lain in this;—that the miracles of *Moſes*, beſides being of a nature infinitely ſuperior to theirs, were done immediately, and

with great facility: thoſe of the Magicians, by the intervention of certain charms and incantations.—Had not *Moſes* however been preſent, to overrule them by a ſuperior power, it is very reaſonable to believe that whatever they might have done by virtue of any magical or diabolical arts, God would never have permitted them to perform ſuch things as had, at leaſt, the appearance of true miracles, and were ſufficient to deceive all indifferent beholders.—Again,

Moſes ſays, "If there ariſe among "you a prophet, or a dreamer of "dreams, that giveth thee a ſign or a "wonder, ſaying, let us go after "other Gods (beſides the Lord), ye "ſhall not hearken to the words of "*that* prophet; but ſhall walk after "the Lord, and keep his command-"ments, and obey his voice." So

that, if miracles be wrought to introduce the worſhip of other Gods, beſides HIM, whom reaſon, and the ſcripture teaches and aſſures us to be the only true GOD,—if they be done to ſeduce men to immoral doctrines and wicked practices;—if they be performed to contradict a religion already eſtabliſhed by ſuch miracles as inconteſtably are true;—if ever ſo aſtoniſhing miracles be performed for ſuch ill deſigns as *theſe*, they are not to be regarded; but muſt be rejected with that conſtancy and firmneſs, which become a man acting under the juſt principles of natural reaſon and religion.—There are therefore certain tokens of diſtinction, either reſpecting the works themſelves, and the manner of their being done;—or reſpecting the perſons who perform them, which make an eſſential difference between *real miracles* and *lying wonders*.—In

reſpect of the *works*, they muſt, firſt, be poſſible; or at leaſt not ſtrictly impoſſible;—they muſt be probable alſo, and not ſuch as ſavour of fable and romance; nor yet be below the majeſty of God, the great ruler and governor of the world; nor inconſiſtent with his character as a gracious and good Being: they muſt be performed openly in the face of the world, and before many competent witneſſes; readily, and without previous forms and ceremonies, ſavouring of magic and incantation; and upon all important occaſions, to ſhew the permanency of the divine power by which they are performed.

In relation to the *perſon*, it is requiſite that he be one of good report for his unblameable conduct and deportment; in the perfect exerciſe of his ſenſes and underſtanding; conſtant

and uniform in the meſſage he delivers; and that the *doctrine*, he endeavours to eſtabliſh by his miracles, be conſiſtent with the right notions and worſhip of God; bearing a ſtrict conformity with the former revelations of his will; of a tendency to deſtroy the devil's power in the world, to recover men from their ignorance and ſins, and, in ſhort, to advance the general welfare of ſocieties, as well as every man's particular happineſs, in this life, and in his preparation for a better.—By theſe rules any perſon of a ſober conſideration may be enabled to diſcern between true and falſe miracles; becauſe we are very ſure, ſo far as God's attributes can convince us, that he will not ſuffer the ſame *degree* of evidence to concur in confirming both, without a poſſibility to diſtinguiſh them.

SECTION IX.

Of the Impoſſibility of ſome MIRACLES *being falſe ones.*

WERE we to allow for once, that in ſome very particular caſes, and for ſome very particular reaſons, God would permit men under the influence of evil ſpirits to do true miracles in confirmation of any real impoſture,—in order to exerciſe our faith, and prove us, whether we will adhere to the truth, which by mighty ſigns and wonders he hath already eſtabliſhed among us,—yet that this ſhould be done in all caſes, without any means to diſtinguiſh falſe miracles from true ones, appears to be a thing impoſſible.

Some things for inſtance, are ſo great, that it is not reaſonable to conceive that any created powers *can* do them; or that, if they could, God would permit them to have ſucceſs. Such is the making a great and general alteration in the courſe of nature.—Some things are ſo good and beneficial to mankind, that wicked and infernal agents *will* not perform them, even though they were able to do ſo.—Such are the caſting out of devils, the diminiſhing the influence of the evil one, the counteracting ſin, or the diſcovery of moral truths.—Some things are of ſuch a nature, that theſe malicious ſpirits *dare* not do them, from the fear of meeting ſevere chaſtiſement for their preſumption;—ſuch as the directly oppoſing God's extraordinary meſſengers.—And laſtly, there are ſome things ſo peculiarly appropriated to God, that no other

being,—otherwiſe than as actuated by his divine power, and immediately dependent on it, can in the leaſt intermeddle with them.—Such are the knowledge of future contingencies, the diſcernment of our ſecret thoughts and intentions, and the reſtoring of the dead to life;—for "I am HE," ſaith the LORD, "and there is none "beſides ME. I ſhew the things *to* "*come*; I ſearch the *heart*, and try "the *reins*; I kill, and I make "*alive*."

There being then, ſo many caſes, wherein either the will or power of diabolical agents *muſt* fail, their compaſs of working miracles cannot be ſo large and extenſive, as ſome may perhaps imagine.—But even were it more extended than it is, upon the ſuppoſition that we believe in a righteous providence, we can not imagine

that he will ſuffer them to uſurp ſuch a tyranny over the minds of men, as to make thoſe things paſs with the ſober and inquiſitive part of the world for divine miracles, which have been only counterfeits and impoſtures. —We may rather conclude and be aſſured, that if the providence of God be concerned in the diſcovery of *Satan*'s deſigns, there muſt be ſome means of diſcovery; and thoſe means can be ſuppoſed to be no other than ſome rational and ſatisfactory evidence, whereby we may know when ſtrange and miraculous things are done by *Satan* to deceive men, and when, by the power of GOD, to confirm a teſtimony truly divine.—And ſuch means we have already conſidered.

SECTION X.

APPLICATION of the ARGUMENT from MIRACLES.

IN judging of the credibility of Miracles, it appears to be moſt certain, that, whatever may be the *ingenious* difficulties which ſome perſons have conceived herein, there is no ſuch antecedent improbability attending them, as no human teſtimony can ſurmount. The probability of their exiſtence is at leaſt as great, as that a revelation of infinite importance to mankind ſhould be vouchſafed to them: that is, if it be probable that ſuch a revelation ſhould be made known to men at all, it is at leaſt in the ſame degree to be eſteemed probable, that it ſhould be atteſted by

miracles;—as one of the *moſt* convincing methods of conveying to mankind the aſſurance, that it comes from GOD, and that it has HIM for its author and propoſer.

Thus much in general;—as to the miracles, by which the ſcriptures are confirmed and authenticated, we conſider them as true, becauſe there is no preceding divine revelation which they contradict, nor any immoral doctrine which they deliver; nor is there any one circumſtance belonging to them, by which they can be found *falſe*.—Moreover, the teſtimony which reports them to us is unqueſtionable. So that in this caſe, *that* which all the wit and ingenuity of man cannot prove to be ill-founded and falſe, muſt be eſteemed *true*, or elſe God would ſuffer his own name and authority to be uſurped and abuſed, and mankind

to be impoſed upon, in a matter of the *higheſt* importance, without any poſſibility of diſcovering the impoſture;—which it is contrary to the divine attributes for him to permit. But if neither the miracles themſelves, nor the doctrines which are atteſted by them, can be diſcovered to have any deceit or defect in them, and be moſt excellent, moſt divine, and moſt worthy of God; we have then all the evidence for the truth of the miracles, and of the religion, which they were wrought to eſtabliſh, that we can have for the being of God himſelf. For if theſe miracles and this religion be not from God, we muſt ſuppoſe either that God *cannot*, or that he *will* not, ſo reveal himſelf by miracle to the world, as to diſtinguiſh his own revelation from impoſtures: both which ſuppoſitions are contrary to the divine attributes; contrary to God's omnipo-

tence, becauſe he can do all things, and therefore can exceed the power of all finite Beings; contrary to his honour, and wiſdom, and goodneſs, becauſe theſe require both that he ſhould reveal himſelf to the world, and that he ſhould do it by miracles, in ſuch a manner as to make it evident which is his revelation. But if he both can, and will, put ſuch a diſtinction between falſe miracles and true ones, as that men ſhall not, but by their own fault, be ſeduced by any falſe miracles, then, *that* religion which is confirmed by miracles, concerning which nothing can be diſcovered to be either impious or falſe, muſt be the true religion.

It is however always to be remembered, that though miracles are a moſt fit and proper means to prove the truth of religion, yet they are not

only to be conſidered *alone*, but in conjunction with *other* proofs; and that they muſt neceſſarily be true miracles, or miracles wrought to eſtabliſh the true religion, when the religion, upon account of which they are wrought, cannot be diſcovered to be *falſe*, either by any defect in the miracles themſelves, or by any other means; but has all the marks and characters of truth.—Becauſe, God would not ſuffer the evidence of miracles, and all other proofs, to concur in the eſtabliſhment and confirmation of a falſe religion, beyond all poſſibility of our diſcovering it to be ſo.

SECTION XI.

Of SCEPTICISM.

BY "Scepticiſm" is meant an unreaſonable *difficulty* in believing;—a ſuſpending of the mind's aſſent, after the proper grounds of conviction have been preſented to it. Such ſceptics are all they, who will not be contented with thoſe ſorts of proof, which things are capable of admitting;—for inſtance, who will not believe things which were done before their own time, becauſe they did not ſee or hear them; or becauſe they are not proved to them by mathematical demonſtration, which all hiſtorical facts whatever are, by their very nature, alike incapable of receiving.—Such alſo are they, who

are ſo *partial* in giving their aſſent, as to believe the hiſtories of *Julius* and *Auguſtus Cæſar* without the leaſt ſcruple, but are full of doubts about the hiſtory of JESUS CHRIST, though ſupported by evidences far more clear and numerous.—To theſe may well be applied, what was ſaid by an excellent writer* in relation to this ſceptical humour; "Thoſe who will "pretend *ſuch* kind of grounds for "their diſbelief of any thing, will "never be able to perſuade others, "but that the *true* cauſe, why they do "not give their aſſent, is not becauſe "they have no *reaſon* for it, but "becauſe they have no *mind* to it."—We are naturally very uneaſy under a ſtate of *ſuſpenſe* about any thing, which we are really fond of, and care in earneſt to purſue: and men's willingneſs to continue in ſuſpenſe as to

* Dr. Wilkin's, Nat. Rel.

the truth of a REVELATION, which comes from God, is a ſure ſign that it is a buſineſs, they do not *like*, nor care for. And though this be not downright infidelity, yet it makes men indifferent about all holy concerns, and unactive in the diſcharge of their proper duties; it takes off the *force* and *influence* of every good impreſſion, every moral ſanction, and religious obligation, almoſt as much as infidelity itſelf: and ſuch a ſcepticiſm as *this*, concerning GOD, his PROVIDENCE, and REVELATION, would end in the ſcepticiſm of our very ſenſes, if *theſe* principles were purſued in their direct and neceſſary conſequences.

SECTION XII.

Of INFIDELITY.

THOUGH it be not in the power of any man to believe what he *pleaſes*, becauſe, as things appear at this or that time to his underſtanding, ſo his belief muſt be;—and we can neither be charged with guilt, nor become liable to puniſhments, for what we cannot help,—yet, in ſearching after truth, there are two things which are in our power; namely, the *uſe* of our faculties; and likewiſe, the *due* and *impartial* uſe of them. And if we fail of finding out the truth, or fall into error, by not uſing our faculties at all, or by uſing them unduly, we are certainly accountable to GOD, who

gave them, and who, as our ſupreme LORD, has a *right* to require a *due* uſe, and to puniſh the *abuſe*, of them.

In ſpeculative matters, which no way concern our duty or our happineſs, men may be as ignorant as they pleaſe, without danger of incurring guilt;—but to be an infidel in *religion* through ſloth and careleſſneſs, for want of examining *at all*, or through a *ſlight* and ſuperficial examination, makes men highly *guilty* in the ſight of GOD; both as it is a neglect of uſing and applying the faculties, which he has given us, and as it is manifeſtly contrary to all the rules of reaſon, not to uſe them in a matter which ſo nearly concerns our ſafety and our intereſt: eſpecially when the evidences of REVELATION lie ſo open to the general apprehenſion of mankind, and may ſo eaſily be entered into, and underſtood.

Nor are they leſs guilty in the ſight of God, who, in examining the grounds of Religion, ſuffer their minds to be influenced by *vicious* inclinations;—or by *pride*;—or an affectation of *ſingularity*;—or by any immoral and indirect motive whatſoever. The experience and obſervation of every day convince us, how greatly the judgments and opinions of men are influenced in temporal concerns, by their own private convenience, by intereſt, and other conſiderations, which do not at all belong to the matter they are to judge of; and this may be much more ſuſpected in the judgment they are to make of the truth of Chriſtianity; conſidering how contrary its precepts are to the inordinate deſires and inclinations of mankind.—This is what the apoſtle calls "an evil *heart* of unbelief." And where that is the caſe, infidelity is a

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ſin of the *higheſt nature:* as it corrupts the reaſon and underſtanding which God has given us, and ſubjects them to baſe and unworthy influences;—it degrades our nature, and carries in it an *indifference* whether we be immortal, or die like beaſts; or rather, a *deſire* that we may die like them:—it is an affront to God, when we reject his meſſengers, who come with clear and evident teſtimonies that they are commiſſioned by him; it makes Him a *liar*; is a manifeſt contempt of his great goodneſs in ſending a revelation, and defeats his gracious deſigns and meaſures for the ſalvation of mankind.

From whence we may collect, that to *believe* or *not believe*, is far from being a matter of indifference and ſlight importance, as infidels would make it appear to be.—Others alſo who are in

danger of being ſeduced by them, may be convinced, how nearly they are concerned, before they ſuffer themſelves to be directed by *ſuch* guides, to give the evidences of revelation a thorough and impartial examination.—For which end, the three following "teſts of ſincerity" may very properly be recommended: —firſt, that they find their *hearts* really diſpoſed to embrace *any* doctrine, and to follow *any* rule of life, that ſhall appear to come from GOD: ſecondly, that they have an inward *wiſh* to find a religion well founded, which provides a remedy for the corruptions of our nature, and enſures to all good men a ſtate of happineſs and immortality after this life: thirdly, that they find in themſelves no evil inclination, vice, or paſſion, which diſpoſes them to *wiſh* that ſuch a religion may *not* be true.—Let but

men, before they enter upon their enquiry, put the *heart* under theſe guards, and they may ſafely be perſuaded, there is no danger of its ever being laid hold of, and miſled, by the groſs deluſions of "Infidelity."

We ſuppoſe, however, here, a willingneſs to examine into the grounds of Revelation.—But it is poſſible that contempt beforehand may preclude even a willingneſs to examine. In ſuch a caſe, all that can be ſaid is, that "contempt previous to enquiry" is a *vice*, at leaſt of the *underſtanding*, whatever ſhare the *heart* may have in it;—and like other *vices* muſt be *accounted for* hereafter.

PART THE THIRD.

SECTION I.

Of the ANTIQUITY of the SCRIPTURES in general.

AS it is evident from conſidering the divine attributes, that God would not ſo wholly neglect mankind, as to take no care to diſcover, and make known, his will and commandments to the world; ſo, when there was ſuch a neceſſity of divine revelation, for the happineſs of mankind, both in this world and the next, it is not to be believed that he would defer the making known his will ſo long, as

until the date of the firſt antiquities amongſt the Heathens.—It cannot be denied, that ſome books of the Scripture are by much the moſt ancient books of religion in the world; for it were in vain to pretend that the works in this kind (or indeed in any other) of any heathen author can be compared with the *Pentateuch*, or books of *Moſes*, for antiquity.--And the antiquity of theſe books is one conſiderable circumſtance, whereby we may be convinced that they are of divine revelation. For if God would not ſuffer the world to continue long in a ſtate of ignorance and wickedneſs without a revelation, we may conclude, that he would not ſuffer the memory of it to be loſt; and therefore, a book of this nature, which is by ſo much the moſt ancient in the world, being conſtantly received as a divine revelation, carries great evidence with it, that it is authentic.

The firſt revelation neceſſarily muſt be held to be the *criterion* of all that follow; and God would not ſuffer the moſt ancient book of religion in the world to paſs all along under the notion and title of a *revelation*, without cauſing ſome diſcovery to be made of the impoſture, if there were any in it; much leſs would he preſerve it by a particular and ſignal providence, for ſo many ages.—It is a great argument for the truth of the Scriptures, that they have ſtood the teſt, and received the approbation, of ſo many ages, and ſtill retain their authority; though ſo many evil men, in all ages, have made it their endeavour to diſprove them:—but it is ſtill a farther evidence in behalf of them, that God has been pleaſed to ſhew ſo remarkable a providence in their preſervation.

SECTION II.

Of the KNOWLEDGE of GOD, as revealed to MEN.

IT has been already ſhewn, that it is not to be expected that God ſhould reveal himſelf to every man in particular; and it could not be requiſite, that he ſhould afford a conſtant and ſtanding revelation in all nations of the world. For if mankind be ſufficiently provided for in the "neceſſaries" of ſalvation, this is all, that can in reaſon be expected from a juſt and good God, in his dealings with ſinful and perverſe man.—If men be put in the "ready way" of ſalvation, and have ſufficient means allowed them to attain it; all beyond this is the diſcretionary effect of infinite goodneſs, and depends wholly upon the good plea-

ſure of God; being more than we could promiſe to ourſelves from his juſtice, or, by reaſon, foreſee from his mercy. His wiſdom, however, ſo orders and diſpoſes the effects and emanations of his mercy, as to render them conſiſtent with his juſtice and his honour, as the governor and director of the univerſe.

And if, in the firſt ages of the world, revelations were frequent, and generally known amongſt all mankind, till by their own fault and neglect they were withheld from them; it was the great mercy of God, afterwards, to continue to thoſe nations, who had deſpiſed and rejected him, an opportunity of knowing his will revealed to others: and *this* God was pleaſed to do, by appointing a choſen ſeed, and ſelecting to himſelf a peculiar people, to bear his name before the

nations; and, by the various diſpenſations of his providence, he ſo diſpoſed of that people, that all nations might be inſtructed in the things revealed and delivered to them.—Thus much may be ſaid in general; but it will afford a pleaſing as well as intereſting ſubject of conſideration, to reflect ſomewhat more particularly, by what *means* God was careful to provide, that at *all* times ſome ſenſe of religion ſhould be preſerved in the world; ſo as that at *no* period, from the creation of the world, it could be ſaid, that God was "left without ſome witneſs of "himſelf," among the ſons of men. —We enter not into the *effects* univerſally produced by the occaſional revelations of his will to men; for though it be requiſite that true religion ſhould be made known among mankind, yet it is not neceſſary that God ſhould *compel* obſtinate men to conſider

and believe it. He is not to *force* his laws upon them; it being only to be expected that he ſhould diſcover them, and afford men *ſufficient* means to know, and be improved by them.

For this purpoſe we muſt have recourſe to the accounts, which the Bible gives us; *that* being avowedly the moſt ancient book in the world, conſidered only as mere hiſtory,—from which the knowledge of Religion, in the remoteſt ages of mankind, can poſſibly be obtained.

SECTION III.

Of the WILL of GOD as revealed to MANKIND, before the LAW.

WE are informed by the holy writings, that in the beginning of the world, God was pleaſed to create but one man, and one woman, and to people the earth from them. Now this muſt have exceedingly contributed both to the preſervation of order and obedience amongſt men, and to the retaining of the knowledge of God, and of his ways and dealings with the firſt parents of mankind. Whereas if multitudes had been created, and the earth peopled at once, the natural effect of this would have been ambition and ſtrife, confuſion and ignorance. For as the inhabitants of the

world multiplied, ſo did all ſin and wickedneſs increaſe; though all deſcended from the ſame parents, and theſe parents lived to ſee many generations of their off-ſpring, and to inſtruct and admoniſh them; which, if any thing could have done it, muſt have kept up a ſenſe of God and of religion amongſt men.—*Adam* himſelf performed the office of father, prieſt, and king, to his children; and the office and authority of theſe three characters deſcended upon the heads of families, in the ſeveral generations, and ſucceſſions of kingdoms amongſt his poſterity: for that the ſame perſon was both king and prieſt in the earlier ages of the world, we learn from the beſt antiquities of other nations; and it was ſo likewiſe amongſt the *Hebrews*, till God had appointed an order and ſucceſſion of the prieſthood in one tribe: and therefore *Eſau* is ſtyled a

"profane perſon,"* for ſelling his birth-right, becauſe the prieſthood went along with it.

By all the accounts we have of the world before the flood, we are aſſured that God was pleaſed, at firſt, to afford frequent communications of himſelf to mankind;—and even to the wicked; as to *Cain*, whoſe puniſhment it afterwards was, to be "hid "from the face" of the Lord, and to be driven out from "his preſence." And when the wickedneſs of men had provoked God to deſtroy the world by a flood, he revealed this to *Noah*; and reſpited his judgment for an hundred years; while *Noah* during that time, made it his buſineſs to forewarn the wicked world of their approaching ruin, and to preſerve the knowledge of religion, by all the

* Heb. xii. 16.

ways and means, which a wiſe and good man could deviſe, proper for that end.

It is well known that in ancient times men lived to the age of near a thouſand years. It is known alſo, that of the ten patriarchs before the flood, all but *Noah* lived ſoon enough to ſee *Adam* and the other patriarchs their progenitors: and *Noah* himſelf was old enough to know them all, but *Adam*, *Seth*, and *Enoch*. And, as for good reaſons, the diſperſion of *Noah*'s poſterity over the earth muſt have been gradual, and many generations muſt have paſſed before the remoter parts of it could be inhabited, ſo the ſeveral plantations muſt be ſuppoſed to have held correſpondence with thoſe, to whom they were neareſt allied, and from whom they went out; they muſt be ſuppoſed to have owned

ſome ſort of dependence upon them, and to have paid them ſuch acknowledgments as colonies ever do to their mother-cities, or countries.

All which, conſidering the great age that men lived to in thoſe times, muſt, without a very groſs neglect and contempt of God, preſerve a true notion of religion in the ſeveral parts of the world: for *Noah* himſelf lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood; his ſons were not ſoon diſperſed; their diſperſion was gradual, and they held a correſpondence after their ſeparation, and lived long to educate and train up their children in that knowledge of God, which they had received and been inſtructed in themſelves; and beſides, they had little elſe to diſcourſe upon, but ſuch things as would neceſſarily lead them to it. The hiſtory of men's own nation and family

is that, which they are naturally moſt fond of; and in theſe ages the particulars could be but few, and thoſe very remarkable, and almoſt within the memory of ſome yet living: and every occurrence muſt have brought to their remembrance what they had heard, and had been taught concerning God, and his dealings with them, and their fathers.

Moreover there was a ſpecial hand of God, and a particular over-ruling providence, in the diſperſion and diviſion of nations. For "when the "moſt High divided to them their "inheritance, when he ſeparated the "ſons of *Adam*, he ſet the bounds of "the people according to the number "of the children of *Iſrael*," * he "determined the bounds of their habi-"tation, that they ſhould ſeek the

* Deut. xxxii. 8.

" Lord, if haply they might feel " after him, and find him."* This was the reaſon of the diviſion of the nations " according to the number " of the children of *Iſrael*," who are ſtyled a " peculiar treaſure, a kingdom " of prieſts," and " a holy nation."† There was a particular regard had to the number of the " choſen ſeed," that they might bear a fit proportion to the reſt of mankind, and might be as it were ſo much leaven to the whole maſs; a quickening and enlivening principle, to excite and maintain due apprehenſions of God, and his worſhip and ſervice in the world. This is the reaſon alledged by learned men, why polygamy, which was not permitted from the beginning, ſhould be allowed the *Iſraelites:* for indeed, it was of great conſequence that they ſhould multiply ſo as to have a due

* Acts xvii. 27.——† Exod. xix. 5, 6.

proportion to the reſt of the world; and for the ſame reaſon, the ſurviving brother was required to marry the widow of the deceaſed. Barrenneſs was a reproach; to die childleſs, a curſe; and a numerous offspring, a bleſſing ſo often promiſed, that is is evident, that *many* diſpenſations of the divine providence depended on it. Again,

The better to revive and keep up a ſenſe of religion amongſt men, thoſe, who were moſt eminent for piety, were employed to be God's heralds and ambaſſadors to the reſt of the world. Thus *Abraham*, *Lot*, *Melchizedeck*, and their families, were appointed as monitors and inſtructors to them, in the way of goodneſs and divine knowledge.

The *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* were deſcended from *Lot*, and therefore

it muſt be through their great ſin and negligence, if *they* did not retain a true notion of religion: they had poſſeſſion given them of the land they dwelt in by God himſelf,* by whom the former inhabitants, a wicked and formidable race of giants, were deſtroyed before them;—as the *Canaanites* were afterwards, before the *children of Iſrael.* Our Saviour was deſcended from *Ruth* the *Moabiteſs.* And the *Ammonites* are diſtinguiſhed from the Heathen, by the prophet *Ezekiel.*†

As *Abraham* has the peculiar character given him of, "the friend of "God," and "the father of the "faithful;" ſo his power and influence was very great. He is ſuppoſed by ſome to have been king of *Damaſcus.* We know however that he was a "mighty prince among the children

* Deut. ii. 9, 19.——† Ezek. xxv. 7.

" of *Heth*," and was reſpected as ſuch by them.* The Oak of *Mamre* was had in great devotion by the Heathens. The religion of the ancient *Perſians* is ſtyled in the *Eaſt*, the religion of *Abraham*, and the book, which contains it, the book of *Abraham*; and the Indian *Brahman*, or *Brahaman*, are ſuppoſed to derive their name from him. *Areus*, king of the *Lacedæmonians*, in his letter to *Onias* the high-prieſt,† ſays that it was found in writing, that the *Lacedæmonians* and the *Jews* were brethren, and that they were of the ſtock of *Abraham*. The *Saracens*, and other *Arabians*, were deſcended from *Abraham*; and circumciſion, which was practiſed by ſo many nations, being a ſeal of the covenant, and a rite of initiation, muſt be ſuppoſed to have ſome notion of the covenant itſelf communicated to-

* Gen. xxiii. 6, 10.——† i. Mac. xii. 20, 21.

gether with it. For there is no probability that circumciſion, uſed as a religious and myſterious rite, could have any other original amongſt heathen nations, than from *Abraham*.— As to its being uſed for other cauſes, *natural* or *moral*, and varied in the time of adminiſtration, it is very poſſible, that the *time* might happen to be changed by ſome unknown accident. It appears however always to have been uſed upon a religious account, whatever natural or moral cauſes might alſo be aſſigned. And ſuch the *Jews* themſelves were accuſtomed to aſſign, as well as that of religion.—It is moreover poſſible, that the *religious* cauſe of the obſervance might be forgotten, and the *natural* or *moral* only be retained.

Again, beſides the other ſons of *Abraham*, which were many, *Iſaac* and

Iſhmael muſt have been very inſtrumental in propagating the true religion; and we can ſuppoſe none educated under *Abraham*, or belonging to him, but who muſt have been well qualified for that purpoſe, and muſt more or leſs retain the impreſſions they had received from him: this being the character which God himſelf gives of *Abraham*, "I know him, that he will "command his children, and his "houſehold after him; and they ſhall "keep the way of the Lord."—*Eſau*, by his firſt marriages with two daughters of the *Hittites*, gave them opportunities of becoming accquainted with the religion and worſhip of the *Hebrews*; and by marrying a daughter of *Iſhmael*, confirmed and ſtrengthened the alliance between the true believers. He was the father of the *Edomites*, who, with the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, were put into poſſeſſion of *their*

country by the ſame divine power, by which the *Iſraelites* became poſſeſſed of the land of *Canaan*; and the children of *Iſrael* were commanded "not to meddle with them,—no not "ſo much as the treading of the ſole "of the foot." *

Jacob being ſent to *Padan-Aram* to take a wife of the daughters of *Laban*, abode with him twenty years: during which time, all that he took in hand ſo proſpered, that *Laban* was ſenſible of it, and confeſſed the viſible power and bleſſing of God in it.

Iſaac, to anſwer the purpoſes of God, was *not* permitted to leave the land of *Canaan*, and was forbidden to remove to *Egypt*, when there was a famine in the land;—nor was he upon any account to return into *Chaldæa*,

* Deut. ii. 5.

or to go out of *Canaan*;—*Jacob*, on the contrary, *did* depart from it, when there were enough of *Abraham*'s houſe beſides, to keep up a ſenſe of the true religion among the people of *Canaan*.

Afterwards God manifeſted himſelf to the *Egyptians*, by a great and wonderful providence: for the ſojourning of the children of *Iſrael*, who dwelt in *Egypt*, was two hundred and ten years, at leaſt: till at laſt, by ſigns and wonders, and dreadful judgments; by judgments upon their firſt-born, and upon "their Gods,"* they were brought out from thence; and "the nations heard the fame" of it, and "all the earth was filled with "the glory of the Lord."†

* See Mr. *Bryant*'s late learned publication upon this very curious ſubject.

† Num. xiv. 15, 21.

SECTION IV.

Amount of this Evidence.

THUS it appears, that *Chaldæa* and *Egypt*, the moſt famous and flouriſhing countries in thoſe ages of the world, had the true religion brought home to them by the patriarchs, who were ſent from place to place to ſojourn, to be a pattern and example to the reſt of mankind. And men who travelled ſo far, and converſed with ſo many nations, and were ſo zealous for God's honour, and had ſuch frequent revelations, and the immediate direction of God himſelf in moſt of the actions of their lives, and who were ſo great and powerful, and ſo numerous, muſt needs mightily

propagate religion wherever they came, and leave the idolaters without excuſe: and it cannot be doubted, but that they had great ſucceſs in all places; for even out of *Egypt*, where they endured the greateſt hardſhip, and were in ſuch contempt and hatred, yet "a mixed multitude went up alſo "with them," beſides the native *Iſraelites*.*

And as *Chaldæa* and *Egypt* were famous for learning and commerce, and proper places, by their ſituation, from whence notions of religion might be propagated both towards the Eaſt and Weſt, and other parts of the world; ſo it may again be obſerved, that God's mercy was particularly manifeſted towards the *Canaanites*, before their deſtruction. The example of *Melchizedeck*, who reigned among

* Exod. xii. 38.

them, and the ſojourning of *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, not to mention *Iſhmael* and *Eſau*, with their numerous families, afforded them continual invitations, and admonitions for their inſtruction and amendment; eſpecially the judgment upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and the miraculous deliverance of *Lot*, was enough to ſtrike an awe and terror into the moſt obdurate. But when they would not make due uſe of theſe mercies,—when they perſiſted ſtill in their impieties and proceeded in them till they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities;—God made them an example to others, after they would take no warning themſelves; yet ſtill " executing his judgments upon them " by little and little, he gave them " place of repentance, not being " ignorant that they were a naughty " generation, and that their malice was

" bred in them, and that their cogi-
" tation would never be changed."*

How much the true religion prevailed by theſe diſpenſations of providence, among other nations beſides the *Hebrews*, we have an *illuſtrious* inſtance in *Job* and his friends, who were princes in their ſeveral dominions. They had knowledge of the fall of the Angels;† and of the original corruption of man, which is expreſſed with this *emphaſis*, that he cannot be " clean," or righteous, who " is born of a woman," becauſe by *Eve*'s tranſgreſſion, ſin came into the world.‡ *Adam* is mentioned,§ the reſurrection is deſcribed,‖ and it appears that revelations were vouchſafed to theſe nations.¶ It is plain therefore that the fundamentals of religion

* Wiſdom xii. 10.——† Job iv. 18.
‡ Job xiv. 1. xv. 14.——§ xxxi. 33.
‖ Job xiv. 12.——¶ xxxiii. 15.

were known doctrines amongſt them, and are therefore mentioned both by *Job* himſelf, and by his friends, in as plain terms as may be, and as fully as can be expected in a book which is poetical; the nature whereof requires that known things ſhould be alluded to, but not ſo particularly related as in hiſtory. And there is no doubt but the propagation of religion in other parts of the world would be as evident, if the ſcriptures had, not occaſionally only, and in the accidental courſe of other things, but of ſet purpoſe treated of this matter;—as we may gather from the traces to be yet found in heathen authors, of what the ſcriptures deliver to us; and from the ſeveral alluſions and repreſentations, in the rites and ceremonies of their religions, expreſſing, though obſcurely and confuſedly, the chief points of the ſcripture-ſtory, as has been ſhewn by many learned writers.

SECTION V.

Sufficient MEANS of knowing GOD, after the LAW.

IN ſucceeding ages, after the giving of the LAW, when the *Jews* by their religion and government may ſeem to have been wholly ſeparated from the reſt of the world, and the divine Revelations confined to *one* nation, there ſtill were ſufficient means, and frequent opportunities, afforded for *all* nations to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The law of *Moſes* did particularly provide for the inſtruction of *other* nations in the revealed religion; and the ſcriptures give frequent commandment and encouragement concerning

it.—If any "Strangers" would be circumciſed, and undertake the obſervance of the whole law, they were at full liberty to do it.

And as *Strangers* or *Proſelytes* were thus joined, in the very deſign and inſtitution of the law, with the native *Iſraelites* themſelves, as to all the acts and privileges of religious worſhip, when once they had received circumciſion, though they were not obliged to be circumciſed (but were left at liberty, not under any obligation but to worſhip the true God, and obſerve the precepts of *Noah*); ſo, God had a particular regard to them in their civil ſtatutes and ordinances, to free them from oppreſſion and every thing that might give ſtrangers any diſcouragement from living amongſt the *Iſraelites*, and becoming partakers of their religion with them.

They were equally capable of all the privileges and advantages in the Jewiſh worſhip, as the *Jews* themſelves were; and were debarred of very little in their civil rights: all encouragement imaginable was given to *ſtrangers* to come and dwell amongſt the *Jews*. The law joins them together with the natural *Iſraelite*, both in the curſes it denounces, and in the bleſſings it promiſes; it ſeverely threatens all that ſhould oppreſs or defraud them; it commands the ſame charity towards *them*, as towards the "fatherleſs" and "widow," the *greateſt* objects of human compaſſion, and of the merciful care and providence of God. And the prophets, with the utmoſt ſeverity, rebuke the *Jews* for any oppreſſion or abuſe of them. The *Proſelytes* were not excluded from their ſacrifices, their prayers, and ſacraments; and if they refuſed to

take upon them the obſervance of the *whole* law, yet they had free leave and great encouragement to live amongſt them, believing only in the true God, and obeying thoſe precepts which were given to all the race of mankind after the flood. They might ſhare in all the rites of their religious worſhip, and were invited to do it; but if they would not ſubmit to this, yet they were not therefore rejected, but might partake of their civil privileges, and live under the protection of their government. And it is obſervable, that where the ſame laws are repeated in ſeveral places of ſcripture, the "ſtranger" is no-where omitted; but what relates to *him*, is conſtantly repeated with the reſt, as a neceſſary and *eſſential* part of the LAW. So that never any government had ſo particular a regard for "ſtrangers," or was ſo peculiarly contrived for their encouragement to live under it.

SECTION VI.

Of the Intercourſe with the JEWS, as ſerving to inſtruct other NATIONS.

THE providence of God ſo ordered and diſpoſed of the *Jews*, in all their affairs, as to afford *other* nations frequent opportunities of becoming inſtructed in the true religion; and multitudes of *Proſelytes* were made out of all nations. *Moſes* dwelt in *Midian* forty years, and there married an *Æthiopian* woman; his wife's father, *Jethro*, the prieſt of *Midian*, and his family became converted; and* after he had met *Moſes* in the wilderneſs, he returned to make Proſelytes in his *own* country. And the

* Targ. Jonath. Exod. xviii. 27.

deliverance of the children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt* magnified the power of God in all countries, whither the report came of a thing ſo wonderful and ſo notorious. The miraculous victories alſo which the *Iſraelites* gained over the *Canaanites*, wherever they came, ſtruck a mighty terror into all thoſe nations; as we ſee by the fear of *Balak*,* and from the ſpeech of *Rahab*,† and of the *Gibeonites*,‡ who were glad to make uſe of any pretence as an expedient to ſave themſelves.

After the death of *Joſhua* the *Iſraelites* were in ſubjection to the king of *Meſopotamia* eight years; to the king of *Moab* eighteen years; to *Jabin* king of *Canaan* twenty years; to the *Midianites* ſeven years; to the *Philiſtines* forty years. And when

* Num. xxii.—— † Joſh. ii. 9.
‡ Joſh. ix. 9, 10.

they were ſo often and for ſo long a time ſubdued by their enemies round about them, for their idolatries, and other tranſgreſſions; and then again, upon their repentance, were reſcued from their oppreſſion by *Gideon*, and *Jeptha*, and *Sampſon*, all raiſed up for that purpoſe; this muſt give great occaſion and opportunity to all the bordering nations to know and conſider *that* religion, the obſervance or neglect of which had ſuch viſible effects upon its profeſſors: for under their affliction, and in the time of their repentance, they uſed to declare the cauſe of all their miſery, and make known the power of their *own* God, together with the vanity and ſinfulneſs of idolatry.--So that their being ſo often and ſo long under the oppreſſion of their ſeveral enemies, was a merciful leſſon of almighty providence to the nations who had them in ſubjection, as

well as intended for the puniſhment and amendment of the *Iſraelites* themſelves.

What good uſe the nations made of all theſe methods of divine providence, doth not fully appear to us from the holy writings; but that many would be much influenced and benefited hereby, cannot reaſonably be doubted, whatever might be the caſe with others.

The *Philiſtines*, it is well known, were in a wonderful conſternation, when they underſtood that the ark of God was brought into the camp.—And when it was taken by them, it was more terrible to them than the enemy could have been, if he had conquered them: they were tormented with diſeaſes and plagues whereſoever the ark was carried; and their God, *Dagon*, was ſo little able to help them, that he fell down before it, and was broken in

pieces. And theſe were judgments of ſo remarkable a nature, that thoſe people muſt have been left without excuſe, who did not forſake their idolatries, and turn to the *living* GOD, who thus manifeſted himſelf among them.

SECTION VII.

Of the further SUCCESSES *of the* ISRAELITES, *to the ſame End.*

THE miraculous victories of *Saul*, and *Jonathan*, and *David*; and *David*'s ſtay with *Achiſh*, king of the *Philiſtines*, at *Gath*, with the favour and confidence he obtained from that king, gave the *Canaanites* ſtill repeated opportunities and motives to converſion and repentance.—*David* extended his

conqueſts far and near; "and the "fame of *David* went out into all "lands, and the Lord brought the "fear of him upon all nations." Wherefore he declares, "I will give "thanks to thee, O LORD, among "the *Heathen*; and ſing praiſes unto "thy name."—"Let men ſay among "the *Nations*, the LORD reigneth." He knew it to be the deſign of GOD, in the diſpenſations of his providence, that he ſhould proclaim his power and greatneſs. And accordingly he did this with ſo good effect, that in the beginning of *Solomon*'s reign, the *Strangers* or *Proſelytes* in the land were found to be "an hundred and fifty "thouſand, and three thouſand and "ſix hundred;"*—who were all men fit to be employed in the building of the Temple; and the reſt muſt be ſuppoſed very much to exceed that

* ii. Chron. ii. 17.

number, reckoning both ſexes, of all ages.

In *Solomon*'s reign, the kingdom of *Iſrael* became yet more famous and flouriſhing; *Hiram* king of *Tyre* held great correſpondence with him; and, as is ſuppoſed on good authority,* gave cities to *Solomon* in his own land, who placed *Iſraelites* in them; and he, in like manner gave cities to *Hiram*, in *Galilee*,† in confirmation of the league between them.—*Hiram* is ſaid to have bleſſed "the Lord God of "*Iſrael*, that made heaven and earth."—*Tyre* was a place of great trade and commerce: there was no place of greater traffic, nor any that ſent out more or greater colonies, or into more diſtant parts of the world; and therefore none could be more proper to eſtabliſh a correſpondence with, from whence religion might be better pro-

* Kimchi, and Lightfoot.——† i. Kings ix. 11.

pagated. The Queen of *Sheba* came to ſee the glory of *Solomon*'s kingdom, and bleſſed the LORD his GOD.*— She, according to *Joſephus*, was queen both of *Egypt* and *Ethiopia*. His wiſdom was every where magnified: "And there came of all people to "hear the wiſdom of *Solomon*, from "all kings of the earth, which had "heard of his wiſdom." "All the "earth ſought to *Solomon* to hear his "wiſdom, which God had put in his "heart." His dominions were exceeding great: "He reigned over all "the kings from the river *Euphrates*, "even unto the land of the *Philiſtines*, "and to the border of *Egypt*."

The trade and correſpondence of the *Iſraelites* with foreign nations was greatly advanced in his time; their trade extending as far as *Tarſhiſh* and

* 1. Kings x. 9.

Ophir. *Tarſhiſh* is tranſlated *Carthage*, in the *Septuagint*; by ſome it is ſuppoſed to be *Tarteſſus* in *Spain*; others place it in the Indies, beyond the *Ganges*.—And as to *Ophir*, whether it be imagined to be *Zephala*, or *Cephala*, in *Africa*, toward the *Cape of Good-Hope*, or *Ceylon*, or *Sumatra*, or even in *America*, as ſome have been of opinion, all agree that it muſt have been in ſome very diſtant part of the world; and wherever it was, the traffic and dealings which the *Iſraelites* had there, afforded a great opportunity to the Heathens to become inſtructed in the knowledge of GOD and of true Religion.

SECTION VIII.

The like Effects from the SEPARATION *of the* TEN TRIBES.

THE diviſion of the ten tribes, after the death of *Solomon*, and the erection of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, diſtinct from that of *Judah*, with the many leagues and wars which theſe two mighty kingdoms had with the kings of *Egypt*, and *Syria*, and *Babylon*, and with other nations, could not but exceedingly conduce to the divulging of the true religion in the world, and give opportunity to the prophets to declare their prophecies, and work their miracles among the *Heathen*; as we find in many inſtances, they did. And the captivity of the *Jews*, for ſeventy years in *Babylon*, made their

religion to be almoſt as well known there, as in *Jeruſalem* itſelf.

During the captivity, *Jehoiakim* was reconciled to the king of *Babylon*, and in great favour with him. "His "throne was ſet *above* the throne of "the kings that were with him in "*Babylon*." The *Jews* were commanded to take wives for them, and for their ſons, that they might be "increaſed there, and not dimi-"niſhed;" and they were not only conſiderable for their number, but were in great eſteem, and in places of great honour and truſt; and their religion was *extolled* and recommended by public edicts to all under that vaſt empire. The almighty power of God was manifeſted by *Miracles*, and by the *interpretation* of *Dreams* and *Prophecies*; his name, his majeſty, and honour were acknowledged, and pro-

claimed, in the moſt public and ſolemn manner, throughout all the *Babylonian* empire, at the command of princes who were idolaters, and who were compelled to do ſo by the convictions of their own conſciences, wrought in them by the irreſiſtible power of God.*

Daniel had acquainted *Cyrus* (as *Joſephus* ſays) with the prophecy of *Iſaiah*, in which he was, ſo long before, mentioned *by name*. However, the Lord ſtirred up the ſpirit of *Cyrus*, by this, or by ſome other means, to accompliſh the prophecy, which he had made both by *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah* concerning the reſtoration of the *Jews*, after a captivity of ſeventy years: and *Cyrus* ſent forth his proclamation, declaring that he had received his kingdom from GOD, with a charge

* Dan. ii. iii. iv. &c.

to rebuild the temple at *Jeruſalem*. And this decree of *Cyrus* was reinforced by *Darius* and *Artaxerxes*.* Now ſo many ſeveral decrees put forth in favour of the religion of the *Jews*, with the miraculous power and wiſdom which gave occaſion to them; —the advancement of *Daniel* and others, with the long life and continuance of *Daniel* in that power and eſteem, muſt leave all the Eaſtern parts of the world without excuſe, that were not converted to the knowledge and worſhip of the true God.

* Ezra vi. vii.

SECTION IX.

The ſame Effects from the RESTORATION, *after the* CAPTIVITY.

AS the ten tribes were carried away captive before the others; ſo, upon the reſtoration of the tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, all but a few, in compariſon of the other tribes, remained in the places of their captivity:—and many of thoſe two tribes alſo choſe rather to continue in *Babylon*, than forſake the poſſeſſions which they enjoyed there. It is ſuppoſed that not much more than half of them returned: and there were afterwards three celebrated univerſities of the *Jews* in the *Babyloniſh* territories, beſides ſeveral other places, famous for

learning.—The *Jews* relate, that the ten tribes were carried away not only into *Media* and *Perſia*, but into the northern countries beyond the *Boſphorus*; and by ſome authors they are found even in *Tartary*. The *Odomantes*, a people of *Thrace*, were circumciſed, and the ſcholiaſt of *Ariſtophanes** ſays, that they were reported to be *Jews*. In proceſs of time they went as far as *China*.

The conqueſts of *Cyrus* opened a great correſpondence between the nations of the world: and his particular favour to the *Jews* made them to be much taken notice of by other nations. It is obſervable, that after the captivity the *Jews* were never given to idolatry. And though they were before too much addicted to it, yet this

* Acharnens. Act i. Scen. 4.

gave occaſion to PROPHECIES and MIRACLES, to withdraw them from it:—which, with the judgments of God that befel them for their iniquities, gave continual manifeſtations to the world of the truth of their religion.

When the ten tribes were carried from *Samaria*, and ſtrange nations were tranſplanted thither in their room, God ſtill would not ſuffer his name and worſhip to be quite neglected and forgotten amongſt them, and they were compelled to ſend for a prieſt back again, to teach them the fear of the Lord.*

And after the taking of *Jeruſalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the death of *Gedaliah*, who was ſet over them that were left behind in the land of *Judah*, all the people that were not before

* ii. Kings xvii.

carried to *Babylon*, fled into *Egypt*; *Jeremiah* being *forced* along with them; who there propheſied againſt *Egypt*, foretelling its deſtruction by the *Babylonians*,* and at laſt ſuffered martyrdom.—Their going into *Egypt* at all was indeed contrary to the word of the Lord by *Jeremiah*; but the providence of God ſo ordered things, that *Jeremiah* ſhould be carried thither with the reſt, to bear witneſs againſt their wickedneſs and obſtinacy; and to denounce ſevere judgments upon them and the *Egyptians*, in whom they placed their confidence, rather than in the living GOD; and then to die in teſtimony of the truth of what he had delivered.

So well known was the God of *Iſrael* and his worſhip among the nations, that *Cyrus* and *Darius* deſired

* Jer. xliii.

the prayers and ſacrifices of the *Jews*, in behalf of themſelves and of their kingdoms. *Alexander* the *Great*, *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, *Auguſtus*, *Tiberius*, and *Vitellius* ſent victims to be ſacrificed at the temple of *Jeruſalem*.* The *Jews* conſtantly offered ſacrifices and prayers for the kings and emperors under whom they lived, and for their allies and confederates; and it was moreover expected of them:—for the omiſſion of this, contrary to their known and approved cuſtom in all former times, was the thing which haſtened their final deſtruction by the *Romans*.

* Philo and Joſephus.

SECTION X.

Concluding PARTICULARS *as to the* CONDITION *of the* JEWS.

THE favour ſhewn to the *Jews*, and the honours paid to their religion, among the greateſt and moſt illuſtrious characters of the world, were very remarkable. But the hand of providence was conſpicuouſly diſplayed in every thing which concerned them: and, without doubt, they were made uſe of as *inſtruments* of GOD's *deſigns* and purpoſes, for the promotion of his name among the Heathen; and for the advancement of that great ſcheme of man's SALVATION, which in due time was to be announced to the world.—To this end the military diſpoſitions and atcheivements of the

greateſt conquerors were made ſubſervient; and the tranſactions of mighty EMPIRES had a like neceſſary connection with the people of God.

The courſe of *Alexander*'s victories was ſo unexpected, ſo ſudden, and every way ſo wonderful, that it alarmed the world: and no man can believe that this was deſigned by providence only to gratify the ambition and vanity of a raſh youth; but rather to open a way of communication between the ſeveral parts of the earth, to the benefit of mankind, in the improvement of all uſeful knowledge. And when this work was *done*, he was no longer the ſame perſon he had been before, but ſoon reſigned his conqueſts with his life.

It is obſervable, that *Alexander* was exceedingly addicted to learning, that

he had philoſophers with him, and deſigned to introduce the *Greek* tongue by his conqueſts, and eſtabliſh it, as the univerſal language.—When he left the mother and children of *Darius* at *Suſa*, he took care to appoint them inſtructors in *this* tongue. He erected above ſeventy cities among the barbarous nations, mixing *Greeks* with the natives; and ordered thirty thouſands boys to be educated in the *Greek* learning.—A happy preparation this—for the rapid furtherance of religious knowledge, by means of *that* language, into which the ſcriptures were ſoon after to be tranſlated.

Alexander is reported to have gone to the temple at *Jeruſalem*, and offered ſacrifice; and to have been mightily encouraged in his enterpriſe againſt *Perſia*, by the prophecy of *Daniel*: he remitted the tribute of every ſeventh

year, in which, by their law, they were obliged not to ſow their ground; which was afterwards remitted to them likewiſe by the *Romans:* he granted to the *Jews*, who in great numbers enliſted themſelves in his army, the free exerciſe of their religion;—and thoſe of *Sanballat*'s faction, who followed him into *Egypt*, he placed in that part of *Egypt* called *Thebais.*

When *Ptolemy*, the ſon of *Lagus*, took *Jeruſalem*, he tranſplanted the *Jews* into *Egypt*, putting many of them into his garriſon, and allowing them equal privileges with the *Macedonians*; by which encouragement, many, beſides thoſe whom he tranſported, voluntarily went to dwell there. And beyond the ſignal favours and honours beſtowed upon the *Jews*, by *Ptolemy Philadelphus* (who likewiſe

cauſed the holy ſcriptures to be tranſlated into the *Greek* tongue), *Seleucus Nicanor* granted them the freedom of *Antioch*, and of the cities which he had founded in *Aſia*, and the *Lower Syria*; and theſe privileges remained to them till the time of *Joſephus*, after all that they had done to deſerve being deprived of them.

Antiochus the *Great* ſent forth his letters and edicts, which are to be ſeen in *Joſephus*, in favour of the *Jews*, more eſpecially in what related to their religious worſhip. And *Seleucus*, ſon to this *Antiochus*, after his father's example, out of his own revenues, bore the coſt belonging to the ſacrifices.* *Antiochus Epiphanes* himſelf at laſt, under the avenging hand of God upon him for all his impious cruelties, acknowledged himſelf puniſhed for

* ii. Macc. iii. 3.

his ſacrilege, and other miſchiefs committed at *Jeruſalem*.*

Antiochus Pius, when he beſieged *Jeruſalem*, not only granted a truce for ſeven days, during the "feaſt of "Tabernacles," but ſent rich and noble preſents for ſacrifices; and a peace being concluded upon honourable conditions, with regard particularly to religion, *Johannes Hyrcanus* accompanied *Antiochus* in his *Parthian* expedition; and the "feaſt of Pente-"coſt" falling the day after the ſabbath, *Antiochus* ſtopped his army thoſe two days, for the ſake of the *Jews*.

The ſufferings and martyrdoms under the *Maccabees*, and the reſolution and conſtancy which they ſhewed upon all occaſions, in defence of their

* i. Macc. vi. 12, 13. and ii. Macc. ix. 17.

religion, rendered the *Jews* renowned over all nations: and beſides, their conqueſts were very conſiderable, and the advantages very great, which accrued to religion by reaſon of them.

The temple built by *Sanballat* for *Manaſſes*, who had married his daughter, was an occaſion of the *Samaritans* leaving their falſe Gods.—The zeal too of the Scribes and Phariſees, though they were hypocrites, exceedingly conduced to the extenſion of their religion; for they "compaſſed ſea and land to "make one proſelyte." They taught the neceſſary points of doctrine, though in hypocriſy, and with the mixtures of ſuperſtition.—In ſhort, the *Jews* were diſperſed over all the world; but chiefly ſeated themſelves in *Rome*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*, the three principal cities of the empire; in all which they had great and peculiar privileges; and in *Alexandria* they

had magiſtrates of their own, and lived under a peculiar government by themſelves.—Never had any other nation ſuch a variety of changes and revolutions to mix them with the reſt of the world; and never were any people ſo induſtrious, zealous, and ſucceſsful in the propagation of their religion.

They had their *Proſeuchæ*, and their ſynagogues for divine worſhip, and for reading and explaining the ſcriptures; which men of all religions were admitted to hear, in all places wherever they dwelt; and in *Egypt* they had a temple like that at *Jeruſalem*, built by *Onias*, which drew mighty numbers of *Jews* thither, and continued for the ſpace of three hundred and forty-three years, till the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus*; and in the ſynagogues the ſcriptures were read in the *Greek* tongue, which

was the moſt univerſal language then in the world.—Some have affirmed, that as much of the ſcriptures as was written in *Solomon*'s time, was then tranſlated into the *Syriac* tongue; and there is little doubt but that at leaſt part of the bible was tranſlated into *Greek*, before the time of *Alexander* the *Great:* but the verſion of the *Septuagint* became ſoon diſperſed into all hands, which was made at the command of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*; to whom likewiſe, and his father, *Ariſtobulus* dedicated an expoſition of the law of *Moſes*.

By all theſe means vaſt multitudes of Proſelytes were made to the *Jewiſh* religion in all parts of the world. What numbers there were at *Rome* of this religion, we know from the Roman poets and hiſtorians, and we have as good evidence of its extending itſelf in other places. Not to mention

particular perſons of the greateſt note and eminence, nor particular cities, as *Damaſcus*, where it more eſpecially prevailed; it is evident what numbers of perſons in all nations profeſſed this religion, from the incredible treaſures found by *Craſſus* in the temple of *Jeruſalem*; being ten thouſand talents: equal to above two millions of our money, amaſſed there by the ſums of gold ſent from all places by the *Jews*, and ſuch as became proſelytes to their religion. In ſhort, the *Jews* were every where diſperſed, and every where gained men over to their religion; another proof of which may be had from the great numbers aſſembled at their Paſſovers, and at the feaſt of Pentecoſt "out of every nation under "heaven."

Thus mightily prevailed the religion of the *Hebrews*, till their city

and temple, by a divine vengeance, as *Joſephus* often confeſſes, was deſtroyed; and the law itſelf, with the utenſils of the temple, was carried away by *Titus* among the ſpoil in triumph. And when the *Jewiſh* religion had its full period and accompliſhment, the *Chriſtian Religion*, which ſucceeded in the room of it, and was prefigured by it, ſoon ſpread itſelf into all corners of the earth, and is at this day preached among all nations.

SECTION XI.

Of Memorials, and Remembrances, of TRUE RELIGION *among the* HEATHEN.

IT may gratify the purpoſes of curioſity and enquiry, as well as ſupply uſeful evidences in ſupport of the holy Scriptures, to conſider ſome

of the memorials of *true* religion; as, by one means or other, they have made their way into the traditions of the Heathen, and ſtill appear upon their records.—This is a ſubject which might be carried to a great extent, and accordingly has been conſidered very copiouſly, by many able writers.* A few particulars may here be noticed:—as that, the formation of the earth out of a chaos, is mentioned by the moſt ancient Phænician, Egyptian, Indian and Greek Hiſtorians; the very names of *Adam* and *Eve* by *Sanchoniathon* and others; the longevity of the Antediluvians by *Beroſus*, *Manetho*, and others: *Maimonides* takes notice that the hiſtory of *Adam*, of *Eve*, of the Tree, and of the Serpent were extant among the idolatrous *Indians* in his time. In the

* See in particular Mr. *Bryant*'s great work, his "Mythology."

Greek and Latin hiſtorians we almoſt every where meet with the ſavage life of the Giants, mentioned by *Moſes:* and it is remarkable, that the memory of almoſt all nations ends in the hiſtory of the Deluge. The flood of *Noah*, with the Ark and the Dove were generally taken notice of by Heathen hiſtorians. Two of every kind of animals entering into the ark, are mentioned by *Lucian* himſelf, as a tradition of the ancient Grecians. The account of the flood of *Deucalion* was plainly tranſcribed from that of *Noah*.—Under the hiſtory of the firſt and fabulous ſhip *Argo*, appears to be concealed the real hiſtory of the Ark. —The building of *Babel* is noticed by *Abydenus*; the burning of *Sodom* by *Diodorus Siculus* and others; ſeveral particulars of the hiſtory of the family of *Abraham*, and the reſt of the Patriarchs, by *Beroſus*, and others.

Many particulars alſo of the life of *Moſes* appear in ſeveral ancient writers; divers actions of *David* and *Solomon* in the Phænician annals; ſome of *Elijah*'s are preſerved by *Menander*, and confeſſed by *Julian* himſelf. To which may be added, that the word *Jove* is a plain depravation of the term *Jehovah*. —*Moſes* is ſaid to have received his laws from the God *Jao*, which is another variation from the ſame, or from *Jah*, a word often uſed in the old Teſtament.—The term *Eleleu*, frequently to be met with in ſongs and acclamations by the ancients, has a plain reference to the Hebrew *Alleluia*, eſpecially with the addition of *Jou*, probably the ſame as *Jah*, after it. The Septuagint retains the Hebrew word *Elloulim* for *Songs* or *Hymns*.— It appears alſo that there was a general obſervation amongſt the *Heathen* of one day in ſeven; though length

of time and corruption of manners had greatly obſcured or quite blotted out the remembrance of the original inſtitution: *Joſephus* holds it probable, that the ancient and moſt known example of *Abraham*, gave occaſion to the payment of tythes by the *Greeks*, and *Romans*, and *Carthaginians*, as well as by the *Phœnicians* and *Arabians*. In *Arabia Felix* the merchants were obliged to carry their frankincenſe to *Sabota*, the capital city, and there to offer the tythe of it to their God *Sabas*, and they were permitted to ſell none till this was done. *Sabas* probably was a corruption from *Saboth*, an uſual attribute of the true God.—It has been proved by ſeveral, and is generally agreed by learned men, that many of the rites among the *Egyptians*, were the ſame with thoſe appointed by the law of *Moſes*, or very like them. And there

can be no reaſonable account given of the agreement of ſo many other nations with the *Jews*, in their rites and cuſtoms, but that theſe nations, probably in the days of *Solomon*, or ſome time after, during the flouriſhing ſtate of the kingdoms of *Judah* and *Iſrael*, or perhaps after the captivity, and ſince the diſperſion of the *Hebrews*, had conformed themſelves to them.

A tradition of the manner of the paſſage of the *Iſraelites* through the *Red Sea*, was retained among the people of *Heliopolis*. Pretended *Miracles* were ſometimes wrought among the *Heathen*, by the invocation of the God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; and theſe and other Hebrew names, as *Sabaoth*, and *Adonai*, were commonly uſed by the *Gentiles* in their incantations and exorciſms, which they retained by tradition, though they knew

not the meaning nor original of them. The names of *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, of *Michael*, and *Gabriel*, were alſo uſed to the like purpoſes, as *Pſellus* ſays in his expoſitions of *Zoroaſter*'s oracles. On the coaſt of *Guinea* there is a kind of trial by a bitter water,* like the trial of jealouſy enjoined by the law of *Moſes*, and ſeemingly a remainder of it.—In the adjacent countries, they circumciſe their children, and reſt one day in ſeven;† though without any ſenſe of God, or of his worſhip.—In the kingdom of *Kachemire*‡ are ſeveral marks of judaiſm.§—One who relates that circumciſion, the water of jealouſy, and other rites, are in uſe with the inhabitants of the gold coaſt of *Guinea*, ſays that ſeveral *Europeans* aſſert, that the *Negroes* ſtill retain

* Dampier's Voyage. v. 2.

† Varenius. de divers. Gent. Rel.

‡ Bern. memoir, tom. 4.

§ Boſman. lett. 10, 11, 12.

many laws and cuſtoms which ſavour of *Judaiſm*, and acknowledges that there are divers other uſages among them which ſeem the ſame in effect, as well as in name, with ſuch as occur in the old Teſtament:—among the reſt, the practice of marrying the deceaſed brother's wife, acccording to the well-known cuſtom in the Jewiſh Law.

Thoſe who firſt travelled into *China*, found *Hebrews* there, who called themſelves *Iſraelites*, but knew not the name of *Jews*. They were diſperſed in divers provinces, and read the Pentateuch in the Hebrew tongue, without points.—The obſervation of *New Moons*, years of *Jubilee*, and and *Circumciſion*, was found among the *Americans*, and an infinite number of ceremonies and cuſtoms (ſays *Acoſta*) which reſembled the ancient law of *Moſes*. They had likewiſe a

tradition of *Noah*'s flood. *Hornius* acknowledges that the name of *Joſeph* was in uſe among the *Americans*, and that they frequently mentioned the word *Alleluia* in their ſongs, and uſed circumciſion; and he ſhews, that in their ſeveral languages they have many words from the *Phœnician* or *Hebrew* tongue. The people of *Bengal* retained the name of *Adam*; and in *Madagaſcar* they had the names of *Adam*, *Eve*, and *Noah*.—So that there is no nation but has ſtill had ſome memorials of revealed Religion. And it has been ſhewn by both ancient and modern authors, that the Philoſophers had generally ſome knowledge of the religion of the *Hebrews*, that the *Brachmans* alſo of *India* were not unacquainted with it, and that the laws of the wiſeſt *Heathen* nations were taken from the laws of *Moſes*.—All which would have appeared in many

more and plainer inſtances, if the *Greeks* had been more ingenuous and ſincere; if it had not been their cuſtom to derive the names of places from ſome ſtory of their own invention; if plagiariſm had not been ſo general a practice among them; and if in their hiſtories they had not changed the names of perſons and places to conceal their theſts.*

* See likewiſe concerning the oriental Trinities, in Mr. *Maurice*'s Indian antiquities, now publiſhing.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.